

SPECIMENS
OF
OLD INDIAN POETRY

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SANSKRIT
INTO ENGLISH VERSE

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“Auf, bade, Schüler, unverdrossen
Die ird'sche Brust im Morgenroth!”

FAUST.

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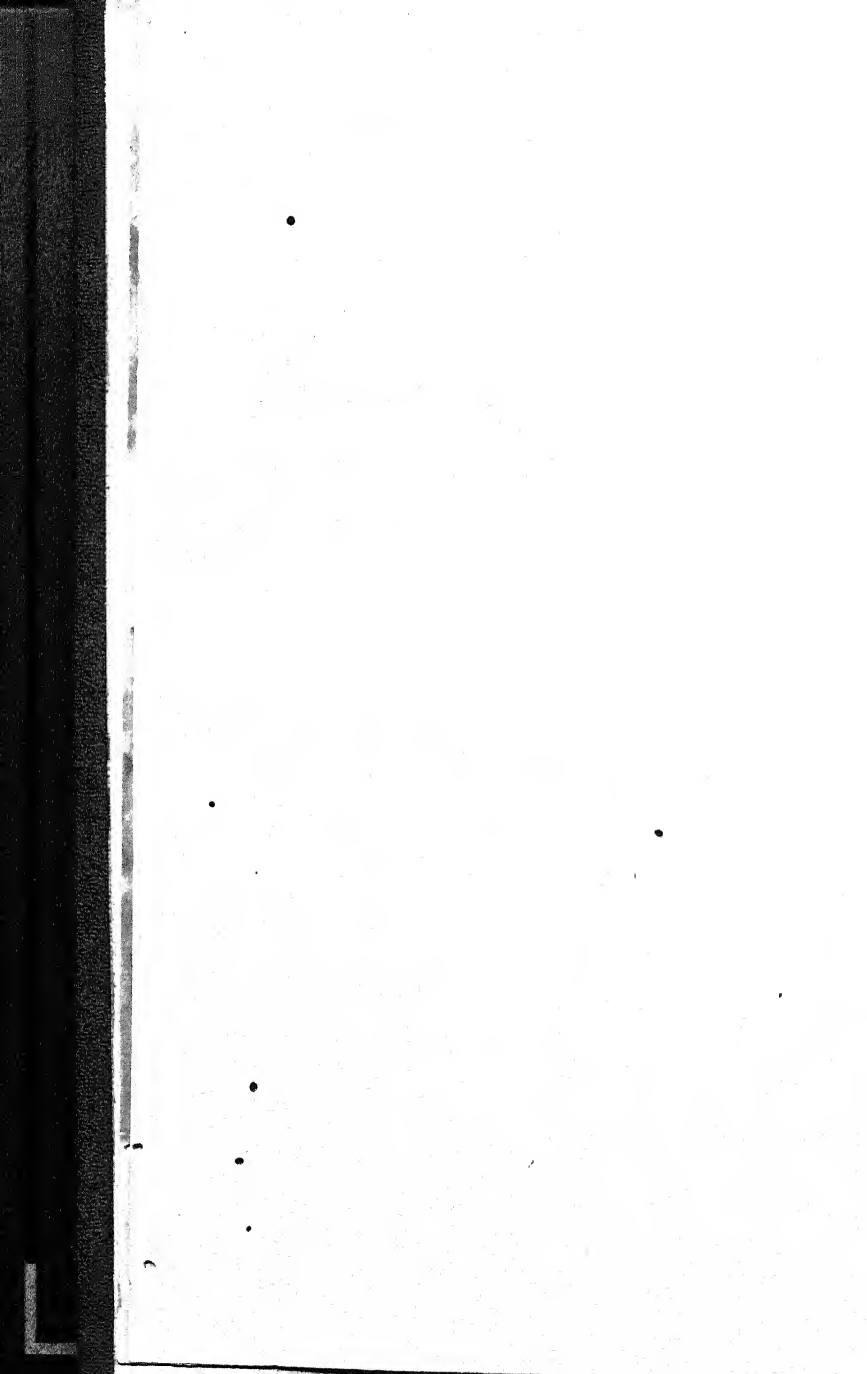
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DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
AND BODEN PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF OXFORD

WHOM FOR HIS UNRIVALLED
LABOURS AND ATTAINMENTS IN THE LITERATURE OF INDIA
KINGS AND SCHOLARS HAVE DELIGHTED
TO HONOUR

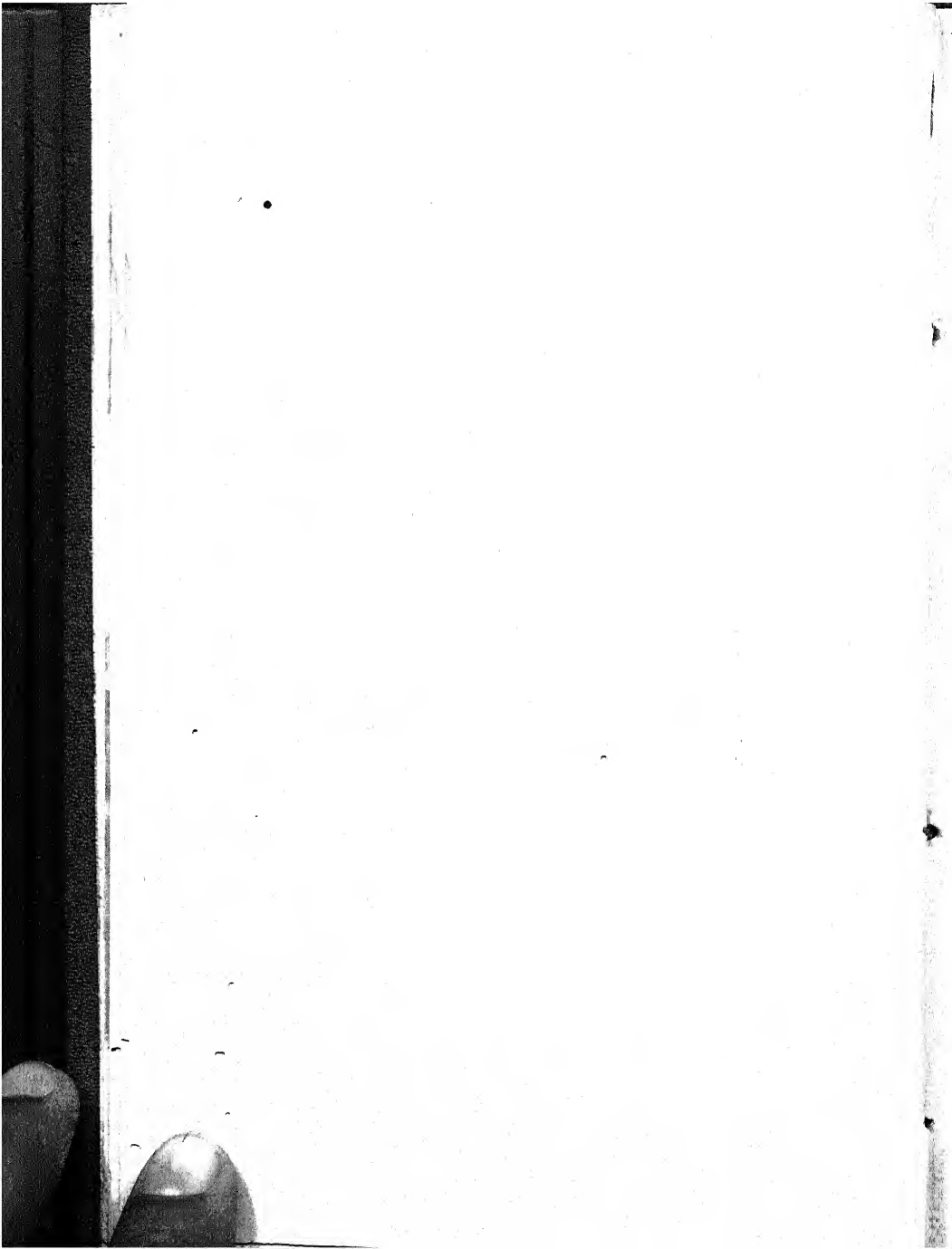
THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED
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FOREWORD

FROM A RETIRED PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT AND
AN OLD PUPIL OF MR. GRIFFITH.



This reprint of "Specimens of Old Indian Poetry" by Ralph T.H. Griffith will, we hope, be received by the public with the same appreciation as was accorded to the author's "Scenes from the Ramayana" and "Idylls from the Sanskrit" reprinted by the Panini Office.

The "Specimens" were the earliest compositions of the future translator of the Ramayana. The then young Oxonian Boden Sanskrit Scholar made his debut before his English readers with the volume in hand as an exhibitor of Sanskrit poetry in English dress.

The "Specimens" served also as a specimen of the author's poetical gifts and cultured taste that found full scope in his latter day productions.

His preface to the "Specimens" shows the extent of his readings and bustles with sentiments of admiration for Sanskrit poetry to which he had devoted himself from his University days of youth to the last days of his octogenous life which ended in the land of his adoption more than half a century after the publication of the "Specimens."

One cannot fail to mark the contrast of the scholarship of the recruits of the Department of Public Instruction of those days in India with that of the Indian Educational Service of our present times as evidenced by Indian witnesses before the recent Public Service Commission.

The fall of standard is to be lamented. Mr. Griffith came out as a Head Master of the Benares College. He was already an author and

had teaching experience in his own country before he set out for an Indian career. His pay was only Rs. 300 per month.

The green English University graduates appointed to the Indian Education Service—whose exposure before the Public Service Commission has been complete—begin their career here with the start of Rs. 500 and an annual increment of Rs. 100. One should have expected better article for the value paid. The pay of Dr. James Ballantyne—the celebrated educationist of the Benares College—never rose, we believe, above Rs. 600 per month. But he retired in the fullness of honours to become the Librarian of the India Office. Educational work in former days like that of the pious priest was taken up in Europe as in India less in a commercial spirit than now. Alas! for the change of spirit that is overtaking both the West and the East.

We leave this digression and go back to the subject of this preface, *viz.*, the "Specimens." It contains poetical selections not only chosen for their beauty of language and style, but for noble teachings and lofty thoughts. Here we offer some specimen lines from the "Sakontala" (p. 41)

"All alone thyself thou thinkest, knowing not thy bosom's lord,
By whom all thy sin is noted, and thy-secret guilt abhorr'd.
Sayeth in his heart the wicked, No one knoweth of my sin—
Yea, the gods around him see it and the spirit from within."

Moral teachings as embodied in the passage quoted above are wanted to be imparted in secular schools so much advocated by high authorities, officials and non-officials alike.

The "Specimens" therefore deserve to be made text-books by the Educational Department and the Indian Universities.

The "Lord's Song" gives the kernel of the whole of the Bhagavad-Gita in half a dozen pages. Readers of this holy book of the Hindus

will welcome this short but full presentation of the subject of the book in plain English verses.

One wonders that this summary of the "Lord's Song" by Griffith has not hitherto received the appreciation it deserves at the hands of the students of the Gita.

The reader will now see that "the Specimens of Indian Poetry," that had long been out of print, wanted republication and the "Panini Office" offers this New Edition to the public who ought to be grateful to the publisher.

PREFACE.

UNJUSTLY, perhaps, has the British Public been reproached with turning a deaf ear to the strains of the Indian Muse ; so little opportunity has as yet been offered to the general reader of hearing and understanding the voice of that distant Charmer of the East. It is hardly to be expected in these utilitarian times that many will be found, in England at least, content to toil for many a weary month in order to acquire a knowledge of so difficult a language as the Sanskrit, even though deeply smitten with the love of sacred song, which they are told will pour its own rich reward into their initiated ear ; usually too, even those who have leisure, opportunity, and every other requisite for the study of the literature of ancient India, are inclined to listen with suspicion to the favourable accounts which those who best can judge its merits and defects have given of it, and although no one, perhaps, who has made himself tolerably acquainted with the treasures of its Poetry, has ever for a moment regretted the labour it has cost him to master the beautiful language that enshrines them, yet this admiration is partly attributed to a natural unwillingness to allow that years of toil have been expended upon an unworthy subject, and such witness is considered to be prejudiced, although freely offered by so general and refined a scholar as Sir William Jones, or a poetical and catholic-minded critic like Schlegel.

If, then, it be through the medium of translation only that the knowledge of Sanskrit Poetry can be expected to gain much ground in England, let us consider whether the Public has had a fair opportunity offered it of gaining even a general idea, in this manner, of the ancient poets of India ; for otherwise it will be manifestly unjust

to reproach it with apathetic neglect of unknown treasures which have been locked up from its observation.

Most of the translations of Indian Poetry that have hitherto appeared, both on the Continent and in England, have been intended rather for the assistance of the Sanskrit scholar, than for the delight of the general lover of the Muse. Thus in Germany, Schlegel, Bopp, Lassen, and other eminent men have done much—very much—for the advancement of this branch of Oriental learning; but with them the first object has been the publication of a correct text for the student's use; the accompanying translations, most accurate and excellent in their own way, being generally literal versions into Latin prose. Sir William Jones again, although he has been numbered among the poets chiefly for his charming paraphrase of an exquisite song of the Persian Hafiz, has left a name ever to be revered by the *scholar* for his prose translations, especially of Manu's Code of Law, but has attempted nothing from the Indian poets in verse; nor will his voluminous writings, although indispensable to the student, supply very much that is likely to prove attractive to the general reader.

Professor H. H. Wilson's graceful version of that delicious little poem, "The Cloud Messenger," has not had a chance of meeting with the admiration it would undoubtedly have elicited, had it been circulated in a more popular shape: forming, as it does, with the Sanskrit text, a class-book for the use of the East India College at Haileybury, it is known only to Oriental scholars in this country and on the Continent.

It remains to speak of the labours of the present Dean Milman in this cause. He published, some years ago, a translation of "Nala and Damayanti," one of the most beautiful Episodes of the "Mahābhārata," in which (to quote the words of a most competent judge) "surpassing grace of style was united with extraordinary faithfulness both to the letter and the spirit of the original;" several other shorter fragments from the same great poem and the Rāmāyana appeared with it. Admirable as these versions are for conveying to the general reader an idea of the majestic simplicity of the old Indian

Epic, and showing how utterly unfounded were the prevailing prejudices against all Oriental poetry, as consisting mainly of a brilliant confusion of high-sounding words and a florid exuberance of extravagant metaphor; yet these extracts are specimens of the early Epics only, and of a style materially different from the polished elegance of the golden age of Sanskrit Literature; and, moreover, although again published, together with Dean Milman's other poetical works, they are in their original separate form out of print, and by no means easy to be obtained.

These considerations then, and a firm belief that there is much in Sanskrit Poetry that needs only to be known in order to be appreciated, have induced the translator to offer this little volume of "Specimens" to the notice of the general reader; a few brief observations upon the principal compositions from which they are taken will be sufficient to introduce them.

It would be entirely out of place here to give the reasons that have led all the Sanskrit scholars, whose opinions upon the subject are worth listening to, to assign the earliest writings of the Hindus with which we are acquainted, to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, at the latest, before the Christian Era; these ancient compositions are the Vedas or Sacred Scriptures of India; records most interesting, although rather from their great antiquity, and the light they throw upon the early and simple religion, the manners, customs, thoughts and feelings of the pastoral nation that inhabited the region of the Himâlaya, than from any poetical beauties which adorn the Hymns of which they consist—psalms to be chanted as part of the worship of God manifested in the great Powers of Nature, who are besought to requite the praise and sacrifice of their worshippers with blessings chiefly of a temporal character—the downfall of their enemies, and their own prosperity, the health and increase of their flocks and herds—that their oxen may be strong to labour, and that their sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets.

Next in antiquity, and scarcely inferior in sanctity, is "The Book of the Law of Manu;" the Moses of the Hindus, supposed

to be the Son of Impersonation of Brahmâ himself; this work may be placed in the fifth or sixth century before our Era. It is evidently a compilation, and not the production of one mind, for it commences with two different accounts of the Creation, and occasional inconsistencies may be detected elsewhere. Of course we must not expect the charms of poetry in this Hindu Leviticus—the verse merely serving to impress the compact precepts more easily and firmly upon the memory; yet it can hardly be denied that the Lawgiver rises occasionally to the moral sublime, when in strong unpolished rhyme he instils into the heart the blessed quality of Mercy, or shows the excellent beauty of all-atoning Truthfulness, and the Peace of Mind which none but those who enjoy it can understand.

About two centuries later in date we come to the great Epic, or Mytho-heroic poems—the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata. Of the former and elder work, Vâlmiki, called “First of Poets,” is handed down as the author: the poem, as the name implies, recounts the adventures and warlike exploits of the hero Râma, Sovereign of Ayodhyâ, or Oude; he was an Incarnation of the deity Vishnu, who came down from Heaven, and was born in the form of a man, to overthrow the power of the ten-headed Giant Râvana, who had by force made himself master of Lankâ, the capital city of Ceylon, and from thence was spreading terror and dismay over Gods and men. The sister epic, the Mahâbhârata, evidently a work of various periods, is ascribed by the Hindus to the ancient Sage Vyâsa, who is celebrated also as the Compiler or Arranger of the Vedas—the Ezra of the Indian Scriptures; even if he has done no more in this composition than gather and string together in their present form the traditional ballad-stories of still remoter times, he has deserved endless gratitude as a Pisistratus, if he cannot command our reverence as a Homer.

The Mahâbhârata is a vast work, containing more than a hundred thousand stanzas, its subject being a war for regal supremacy in India between the sons of two brothers, Pându and Dhritarâshtra: with the main story, however, numerous episodes are interwoven,

more or less connected with the business of the narrative, some of which, it is hoped, will be interesting to the general reader, "abounding as they do" (to quote Professor Wilson's observations upon the two great Epics) "with poetical beauties of the first order, and particularly in delineations of picturesque manners and situations, and in the expression of natural and amiable feeling."*

We may consider the first centuries of the Christian Era to be the Golden Age of Sanskrit literature, and its munificent Augustus was Vikramāditya, King of Ujayin, who lived in the half century preceding that epoch. At his court shone the "Nine Gems," as they are called, of whom the famous Kālidāsa was the brightest and the best; he was the author of the "Cloud-Messenger," to which allusion has already been made,—of the two delightful dramas "Sakontalā," and "Vikrama and Urvasī,"—probably also of the pretty little descriptive poem, "The Seasons," and several other compositions have been attributed to him by his countrymen, although certainly not all upon sufficient grounds.

Of the dramatic writings of the Hindus we shall merely observe, that we possess many excellent specimens of this most interesting branch of their literature, the best of which (with the exception of "Sakontalā," already translated by Sir W. Jones) have been offered to the public by Professor Wilson. Of their lyrical poetry we have but one example, a little pastoral romance in a dramatic form composed by Jayadeva, and called the "Gīta Govinda." There is much uncertainty with respect to the date of this work, but it is probably to be fixed at least as late as the twelfth century of the

* Although our object is not to lavish praise upon the poetry of India, it is impossible to refrain from quoting the words of A. W. von Schlegel upon these poems:—

"Le Rāmāyana et le Mahābhārata sont des monumens d'une antiquité vénérable; mais, abstraction faite de la valeur que cela leur donne, j'y trouve des choses sublimes, d'autres pleines de charme et de grace, une fécondité inépuisable de l'imagination, l'attrait du merveilleux, de nobles caractères, des situations passionnées, et je ne sais quelle candeur sainte et ingénue dans les mœurs qui y sont peints."

Christian Era ; it consists almost entirely of songs, which are connected by short strophes of recitative. Many of these lyrical effusions are too warmly coloured to suit our severer taste, but they are all remarkable, as every ear must confess, for their surpassing melody of flow, uniting the voluptuousness of the "Song of Songs," with all the languishing sweetness of the "Pastor Fido." This work also is capable of a mystic interpretation, and is said by the Commentators to figure the attachment of the Soul to Divine Knowledge ; its trial, fall, and restoration ; in the love, the quarrel, and the perfect reconciliation of Krishna—the darling God of the Indian women—and the beautiful Shepherdess Râdhâ.

More will be said of this little piece, and of some of the other poems to which allusion has been made, as specimens of each are introduced. We do not attempt to give even an outline sketch of Sanskrit Poetry in general, but shall confine our remarks strictly to those compositions from which the extracts are taken.

Mere *verbal* fidelity has not been aimed at in the following versions, although occasionally in the old Epics, the English will be found to run freely step for step by the side of its ancient and long-separated cousin, the Sanskrit ; the translator has endeavoured, however, all he could, to preserve the spirit of the original, which he hopes has not been entirely lost. There are frequently needless repetitions in the tales of the Mahâbhârata, and the reciters of these long stories appear to have had no idea of the value of time ; considerable liberty, therefore, has here and there been taken in omitting and condensing : again, the poetry of Kâlidâsa and succeeding writers is *suggestive* rather than *exhaustive*, and it is occasionally necessary to fill up the outline of a sketch which would otherwise scarcely be intelligible to the general reader ; here also, for another reason, omissions are sometimes advisable or unavoidable.

In conclusion, if these Specimens altogether fail in interest, it must be the translator's fault—he must continue to believe that they would be appreciated if rendered by some more skilful hand ; at the same time the indulgent reader will not forget the difficulty

of translating in general, and especially from an Eastern tongue into our own; he will bear in mind that the poetry of any language *must* lose much in being invested with a strange attire—far more so, when that language is (to use the oft-quoted words of Sir W. Jones) “of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more excellently refined than either.”



SPECIMENS
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Veda Hymns.

THE three following Hymns are taken from the first Book of the Rigveda, which has recently been edited at Oxford, by Dr. Max Müller; this Veda is the most ancient and most important of the four and we may consider it to have been composed about thirteen or fourteen centuries B.C.

The first Hymn here translated is in honour of the Sun—the best image of its Creator—that

“Glorious orb, the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind.”

HYMN TO THE SUN.

I.

RISEN in majestic blaze,
Lo! the Universe's eye,
Vast and wondrous, host of rays,
Shineth brightly in the sky.
Soul of all that moveth not,
Soul of all that moves below—
Lighteth he earth's gloomiest spot,
And the heavens are all aglow!

II.

See ! he followeth the Dawn.
 Brilliant in her path above,
 As a youth, by beauty drawn,
 Seeks the maiden of his love ! *
 Holy men, and pious Sages,
 Worship now the glorious Sun,
 For by rites ordain'd for ages
 Shall a good reward be won.

III.

Look ! his horses, mounted high,
 Good of limb, and swift, and strong,
 In the forehead of the sky,
 Run their course the heaven along !
 Praises to his steeds be given
 Racing o'er the road of heaven !

IV.

Such the majesty and power,
 Such the glory of the Sun,
 When he sets at evening hour
 The worker leaves his task undone ;
 His steeds are loosed, and over all
 Spreadeth Night her gloomy pall.

V.

When he rides in noon-tide glow,
 Blazing in the nations' sight,
 The skies his boundless glory show,
 And his majesty of light ;
 And when he sets, his absent might
 Is felt in thickening shades of night.

* " Which cometh forth as a *bridegroom* out of his chamber,"—*Ps.* xix.

" See how the Morning opens her golden gates,
 And takes her farewell of the glorious Sun ;
 How well resembles it the prime of youth,
 Trimm'd like a younker prancing to his love."—*Henry VI.*

VI.

Hear us, O ye gods, this day !
Hear us graciously, we pray !
As the Sun his state begins,
Free us from all heinous sins ! *
Mitra, Varun, Aditi !
Hear, O hear us graciously !
Powers of ocean, earth, and air,
Listen, listen to our prayer !

* This is one of the few instances in which *moral* blessings are prayed for in these Hymns ; so Adam prays :—

“ If the night
Have gather'd aught of evil, or conceal'd,
Disperse it, *as now light dispels the dark.*”—P. L.

HYMN TO MORNING.

I.

MORNING ! child of heaven, appear !
Dawn with wealth our hearts to cheer ;
Thou that spreadest out the light
Dawn with food, and glad our sight ;
Gracious goddess, hear our words,
Dawn with increase of our herds !

II.

Horses, kine, all wealth have they,
Deities of early day—
All the riches they possess
That the homes of men should bless ;
Morning ! answer graciously !
Boundless wealth we crave of thee.

III.

She hath dwelt in heaven of old—
May we now her light behold !
Which dawning brightly from afar
Stirreth up the harness'd car,
Like as merchant-folk for gain
Send their ships across the main.

IV.

Morning comes, the nurse of all,
Like a matron, at whose call
All that dwell the house within,
Their appointed task begin ;
Creatures frail to death she brings ;
Now each warbler shakes his wings,
And to greet her coming, sings.

V.

All that live adore her light—
Pray to see the joyful sight;
All good things to men she sends,
And her cheering brilliance lends.

VI.

Morning! shine with joyful ray!
Drive the darkness far away—
Bring us blessings every day!

HYMN TO FIRE.

I.

MIGHTY Agni* we invite,
Him that perfecteth the rite ;
O thou messenger divine,
Agni ! boundless wealth is thine.

II.

Agni ! Agni ! with this gift,
Lo ! to thee the voice we lift—
Loved, O Lord of men, art thou,
God that bearest up the vow.

III.

Thou to whom the wood gives birth,†
Thou that callest gods to earth !
Call them that we may adore them,
Sacred grass is ready for them.

IV.

Messenger of gods art thou—
Call them, Agni ! call them now !
Fain our offerings would they taste,
Agni, bid them come in haste.

V.

Brilliant Agni ! lo, to thee
Pour we offerings of ghee ;
O for this consume our foes
Who on demons' aid repose !

* The God of Fire.

† " That is, artificially produced by the friction of two pieces of a particular species of wood used for the purpose."—WILSON.

VI.

Praise him in the sacrifice,
Agni, ever young and wise ;
Glorious in his light is he,
Healer of all malady.

VII.

Purifying, brilliant Fire,
Hear, great Agni ! our desire—
Be thy care the gods to bring
Hither to our offering.

VIII.

Listen, for to thee we raise
This our newest hymn of praise ;
Agni ! let the guerdon be
Riches, food, and progeny !

IX.

Bearer of all invocation,
Agni ! Lord of purest light !
May this hymn of adoration
Be right pleasing in thy sight.

The Book of the Law of Manu.

THIS work, as has been mentioned in the preface, may be assigned to the fifth or sixth century before the Christian Era; probably two or three brief extracts will be sufficient for the general reader, and he may gather some idea of the whole from the following quotation from Sir William Jones's Preface to his translation of the Book. "It contains," he observes, "abundance of curious matter extremely interesting both to speculative lawyers and antiquaries, with many beauties which need not be pointed out, and with many blemishes which cannot be justified or palliated. It is a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks. * * * * It abounds with minute and childish formalities, with ceremonies generally absurd and often ridiculous; the punishments are partial and fanciful, for some crimes dreadfully cruel, for others reprehensibly slight; * * nevertheless, a spirit of sublime devotion, of benevolence to mankind, and of amiable tenderness to all sentient creatures, pervades the whole work; the style of it has a certain austere majesty that sounds like the language of legislation and extorts a respectful awe; the sentiments of independence on all beings but God, and the harsh admonitions even to kings, are truly noble."

THE DUTY OF WITNESSES.

LET all people witness truly, high or lowly be their fame,
Truth makes justice flourish fairly, freeth witnesses from blame;
To itself the soul is witness—it appealeth to the breast,
'Tis its own defence for ever—'tis the truest, and the best.
'Tis a judge supreme within thee, conscious of the least offence;
To that gentle witness in thee, Man! do thou no violence;
Sayeth in his heart the wicked, No one knoweth of my sin—
Yea, the gods around him see it, and the spirit from within.

* * * * *

Is thy spirit calm within thee ? Is thy truthful soul at rest ?
Art thou in sweet loving concord with the lord of thine own breast ?
Go not thou to Gangá's river, seek not Kuru's holy plain—
What sin hast thou to atone for ? what forgiveness to obtain ?

THE DUTY OF SOLDIERS.

NEVER may a noble monarch, guardian of his people, fly,
Should a greater foe assail him, or a less his arms defy ;
He must bear in mind his duty, as is very meet and right,
Not to fly the front of battle, but do bravely in the fight.
To be valiant—guard his people—honour holy Bráhmans—this
Is the monarch's highest duty, and at length will bring him bliss ;
For those kings who labour nobly, toiling with their might and main
For high triumph o'er their foemen—a secure and happy reign—
Shall straightway go up to heaven, when their earthly life is done,
Guerdon which their noble spirit, and unflinching heart has won.
Let the soldier, good in battle, never guilefully conceal
(Wherewithal to smite the unwary) in his staff the treacherous steel ;
Let him scorn to barb his javelin—let the valiant ne'er anoint
With fell poison-juice his arrows, ne'er put fire upon the point.
In his car, or on his war-horse, should he chance his foe to meet,
Let him smite not if he find him lighted down upon his feet.
Let him spare one standing suppliant, with his closed hands raised
on high,
Spare him whom his long hair loosen'd blinds and hinders from to fly—
Spare him if he sink exhausted ; spare him if for life he crave ;
Spare him crying out for mercy, Take me, for I am thy slave.
Still remembering his duty, never let the soldier smite
One unarm'd, defenceless, mourning for one fallen in the fight ;
Never strike the sadly wounded—never let the brave attack
One by sudden terror smitten, turning in base flight his back ;
He that, flying from the battle, by his foe is slaughter'd there,
All the burthen of his captain's sin hereafter shall he bear ;
And whate'er the store of merit laid up by the wretch that fled,
He shall lose it, and the captain shall enjoy it in his stead.

THE DUTY OF KINGS.

He that ruleth should endeavour with his might and main to be
Like the Powers of God around him, in his strength and majesty ;
Like the Rain-God in due season sendeth showers from above,
He should shed upon his kingdom equal favour, gracious love ;
As the sun draws up the water with his fiery rays of might,
Thus let him from his own kingdom claim his revenue and right ;
As the mighty Wind unhinder'd bloweth freely where he will,
Let the monarch, ever present with his spies all places fill ;
Like as in the judgment Yama punisheth both friends and foes,
Let him judge and punish duly rebels who his might oppose ;
As the Moon's unclouded rising bringeth peace and calm delight,
Let his gracious presence ever gladden all his people's sight ;
Let the king consume the wicked—burn the guilty in his ire,
Bright in glory, fierce in anger, like the mighty God of Fire ;
As the General Mother feedeth all to whom she giveth birth,
Let the king support his subjects, like the kindly-fostering Earth.

The Mahabharata.

SAVITRI, OR THE FAITHFUL WIFE.

LIVED a monarch of the Madras, just and holy, mighty-soul'd,
Truthful, lover of all virtue, with his passions well controll'd;
Bounteous, sacrificing ever—Aswapati was his name,
Kind was he to every creature, loved by all who knew his fame.
But the Monarch still was childless—many a weary year pass'd he
Fasting, praying aye for offspring in devout Austerity;
Twice nine years he lived in Penance, praying to the Gods in
Heaven,
And at length they sent a daughter, to his long entreaties given;
The young child was called Savitri—beautiful exceedingly
Grew the happy Monarch's darling, lovely as Incarnate Sri.*
Bright in her surpassing beauty, seem'd she to men's wondering eyes
Like a child of the Immortals new-descended from the skies.
But at the fair maiden's glory, blazing in her youthful pride,
Every prince around was dazzled, and none sought her for a bride.
When the King beheld his daughter ripening in her virgin bloom,
Still unwoo'd by princely suitor, care came o'er his soul, and gloom.

THE KING.

“Choose thyself a bridegroom,† Lady! for none asketh thee of me,
Choose, and let me hear, my daughter, the young prince that
pleaseth thee.

* The wife of the God Vishnu and the Venus of the Indian poets.

† Manu, iv. 90. “Three years let a damsel wait, though she be marriage-able, but after that term let her choose for herself a bridegroom of equal rank.”

The *Swayamvara*, or public choice of a husband by a princess, from a number of suitors assembled for the purpose, is frequently mentioned and described in the ancient Epic poems of India.

For 'tis said in Holy Scripture (thus have I from Brâhmans heard,
 And I will repeat it to thee—listen to thy father's word)
 —'Whoso giveth not in marriage—whoso seeketh not a wife
 —Doeth wrong; and whoso guardeth not his widow'd mother's life.'
 Thou hast heard this text, my dearest—now obey thy father's voice,
 That I be not found a sinner, quickly go and make thy choice."
 Meekly bow'd the modest maiden, with her eyes upon the ground,
 And departed, as he bade her, with attendants troop'd around;
 Many a Hermitage she traversed, riding in a gold-bright car,
 Many a wilderness and forest, holy places near and far;
 Honouring the mighty Sages, duly paying reverence meet,
 And where'er the Lady journey'd, laying treasures at their feet.

II.

Meanwhile to the Madras' Monarch, lo! a Saint of mighty fame,
 Nârad, holiest of the holy, full of truth and wisdom, came;
 She had traversed all the dwellings of the Hermits with her train,
 And the Lady now return'd to her father's house again.
 When within the palace saw she holy Nârad with the King,
 Lowly bent the modest maiden, Saint and father reverencing.

NÂRAD.

"Whither has thy daughter travell'd? Why unwedded is her life?
 Wherefore dost thou not bestow her young and fair, to be a wife?"

THE KING.

"'Twas for this I sent my daughter forth to every Hermitage,
 Hear what husband she hath chosen from herself, O holy Sage!
 Tell at length thy tale, my daughter—say what bridegroom thou
 wilt take."

As a God's she heard his bidding, and 'twas thus the maiden spake:

"Lived a Monarch of the Salwas, mighty warrior, just of mind,
 Dymatsena—thus his name was—but, alas! the King grew blind;
 Sightless he—his son an infant—in this dire extremity
 Fell his kingdom to a kinsman, to a ruthless enemy;

And he fled with Balavatsa, his belovéd faithful wife,
To a Hermit-grove in sorrow—there in Penance pass'd his life ;
His brave son to manhood's glory rear'd within the holy grove,
Satyavan my heart has chosen—Satyavan has all my love."

NÂRAD.

"Hapless is her choice, O Monarch ! little does the maiden know,
How with Satyavan she chooses care and misery and wo."

THE KING.

"Tell me, is he apt for glory, gifted with a noble mind ?
Tell me, is the Prince heroic, is he patient, firm, resign'd ?"

NÂRAD.

"Learnéd as the Gods' own Teacher, glorious as the Sun is he ;
With the Earth's untiring patience, and great Indra's bravery."

THE KING.

"Is the youth a bounteous giver, pious, true, and dutiful ?
Is he of a noble spirit, fair of form, and beautiful ?"

NÂRAD.

"Noble is the prince and lovely, pious, true, and great of soul,
Bountiful is he and modest—every sense does he control ;
Gentle, brave, all creatures love him—keeping in the righteous way,
Number'd with the holy Hermits, pure and virtuous as they."

THE KING.

"Say'st thou she hath err'd in choosing, if thus glorious is he ?
Let me know the fault that stains him—if in such a fault can be."

NÂRAD.

"Yea, one cloud upon his virtues makes them profitless, O King !
'Tis a fault he ne'er can master by severe endeavouring ;
Subject to one shade, O Monarch—only one—his virtues lie,
In a year from this day counting, Satyavan shall surely die."

THE KING.

"Go, my dearest child, Savitri. go, my daughter, choose again,
This one fault is overwhelming, and his virtues are in vain."

SAVITRI.

"Be he virtuous or worthless—many be his days, or few,
Once for all I choose my husband—to that choice will I be true."

NÂRAD.

"Firm is her fix'd heart, O Monarch ! and her purpose changeless still,
And thou must not force her from it, but perform thy daughter's will ;
And 'tis good to give her to him, for there liveth not a man
Gifted with the noble virtues of her chosen Satyavan."

III.

Priests and Brâhmans were assembled ; lucky was the day and good,
When the King with his fair daughter journey'd to the holy wood ;
To the Hermit-King advanced he, and due salutation made,
Kindly was the royal stranger welcomed, and 'twas thus he said :
"See this maiden, my Savitri, good and lovely standing here,
Give her to thy son, great Hermit ! take her for thy daughter dear."

DYUMATSENA.

"Nay, but we are sad Ascetics—all unking'd, unfortunate,
'Tis no life for this young Princess, one so fair and delicate."

THE KING.

"Well we know (and our firm purpose is not changed at all by this)
What is lowliness and splendour, what is misery and bliss ;
Frustrate not my hopes, O Hermit—I have come in love to thee,
Send us not away despis'd—take her to thy family !
As is thy heart so my heart is, fitly shall we be allied,
Let the maiden be thy daughter—Satyavan's beloved bride."
Gladly then the Hermit summon'd all the Brâhmans of the grove,
And the Princes gave Savitri duly wedded to her love.
With his wife of rarest virtues, oh ! how did the youth rejoice !
Oh ! how happy was the Lady with the husband of her choice !
All the gems that deck'd her beauty she put off in lowliness,
And her gentle limbs she cover'd with a hard rough Hermit dress ;
By her meekness and affection, by her ministering care,
Did the sweet contented Lady win the heart of each one there.
Thus within the Hermit-dwelling with her love continued she,
Passing all the time in Penance, and devout Austerity.

IV.

Sadly, sadly as she counted, day by day flew swiftly by,
 And the fated time came nearer when her Satyavan must die.
 Yet three days, and he must perish—sadly thought the loving wife,
 And she vow'd to fast unresting for his last three days of life.
 When they told him of her purpose, vex'd was the Hermit-King
 Thus unto his high-soul'd daughter spake he deeply sorrowing :—
 " Over-hard for thee the trial—O my Princess, how canst thou,
 For three nights in Penance standing, execute thy fearful vow ?"

SAVITRI.

" Grieve not, dearest father, think not I shall sink beneath its length,
 Firm resolve has made me vow it—firm resolve will give me strength."

DYUMATSENA.

" And to break thy vow, my daughter, never will I counsel thee :—
 Go, perform it—is the counsel that should come from one like me."

Thus he spake, and left the votaress to perform her purposed will,
 Like a fair and stately column, standing motionless and still.
 Sadly o'er the grieving Lady went the last unhappy night,
 For her Satyavan must leave her—perish in the morrow's light.
 'Twas the day—the Fire of Worship at the rising of the sun
 By the votaress was kindled, and the morning rites were done.
 All the holy ag'd Bráhmans in due form saluted she,
 And her husband's honour'd parents, as a suppliant, reverently ;
 Graciously the pious dwellers in the holy Hermit-grove
 Spake in kindness to the Lady words of blessing and of love ;
 But the prophecy of Nárad ever weigh'd upon her heart,
 As approach'd the dreaded moment when her love and she must part.
 Came her loving parents near her, and besought her where she stood,
 Now her weary vow was over, to refresh her soul with food ;
 " Nay, no bread for me, dear parents, till the sun has sunk to rest,*
 Still is my resolve unchanging—firm the purpose of my breast."

* 2 Samuel, xii. 22. " While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept ; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live ? But now he is dead wherefore should I fast ? Can I bring him back again ?"

When her husband heard Savitri thus her stern intention say,
 With his axe upon his shoulder to the wood he took his way ;
 But she stay'd him, " Nay, dear husband, but thou must not go alone ;
 Oh ! I cannot bear to leave thee, I will go with thee, mine own."

SATYAVAN.

" All unknown to thee the forest—rough the path and weary thou,
 How then will thy feet support thee, fainting from thy fasting vow ? "

SAVITRI.

" Nay, I sink not from my fasting, and no weakness feel to-day,
 I have set my heart on going—oh ! forbid me not, I pray."

SATYAVAN.

" If it be thy earnest longing, I will do what pleaseth thee,
 Ask my father, ask my mother, that no blame may fall on me."

Gladly went she, and entreating thus before the parents stood,
 " Satyavan, my Lord, is going to fetch wild-fruits from the wood ;
 I would go and tend my husband, if ye will not say me nay,
 For the thought of absence from him seems unbearable to-day.
 Nigh a year within the garden of the Hermitage I've stay'd,
 Fain I'd see the glorious forest with its flowers and its shade."
 Readily her boon was granted, and Savitri, Lady fair,
 Went out with her husband smiling, but her heart was sad with care.
 Lovely woods and stately peacocks met the broad-eyed Lady's view,
 " See !" he cried, the charming forest, see the flowers of brilliant hue."
 But she look'd upon him only, mourn'd him even as the dead,
 As the word the Sage had utter'd she again remembered.
 Delicately walking onwards after her dear Lord she went,
 And expecting, fearing ever, her sad heart in twain was rent.

V.

She, their parching lips to moisten, cooling fruits and berries found,
 Satyavan with ringing hatchet made the silent woods resound ;
 On his brow the heat-drops thicken'd, as with might and main
 toil'd he,
 Sudden through his burning temples shot a thrill of agony.

"Dearest!" cried he to Savitri, "racking pains have seized my head, Aching is my heart within me, and my limbs are wearied ; I must rest awhile, my darling ! pierced with arrows seems my brain, Dearest ! I can stand no longer—rest and sleep will soothe my pain." Down upon the ground she sate her—laid his head upon her breast, And the loving, grieving lady lull'd her Satyavan to rest. Sudden, lo ! before Savitri stood a great and awful One, Red as blood was his apparel, bright and glowing as the Sun ; In his hand a noose was hanging ; he to Satyavân stood nigh, And upon the weary sleeper fix'd his fearful glittering eye. Up she rose in shuddering terror, on the ground she laid his head, And in suppliant posture, grieving, thus with beating heart she said :—

"Sure thou art a God, for mortals never thus in form appear,
Tell me, mighty being ! tell me who thou art, and wherefore here ?"

YAMA.

"Good and pious art thou, Lady ! and a faithful loving wife,
Therefore will I speak unto thee—I am Yama, End of life ;
Short-lived is thy noble husband, and his time is come to die,
I must bind and take his spirit ; Lady ! for this cause came I."

SAVITRI.

"But 'tis said thy rapid angels carry men away to death,
Wherefore then in person hast thou come to rob my Lord of breath !"
To the King of the Departed thus the gentle Lady spake ;
And he told her all his purpose, for her love and virtue's sake :—
"Angels may not bind thy husband, one of goodness so austere,
One so pure from sin's defilement, therefore I myself am here."
Out then from the sleeper's body forc'd he, and bound with strength,
In his cord, the vital being, as it were a finger's length.
In an instant from the features all the grace and beauty fled,
When the lively breath had left him lying motionless and dead ;
Having bound the captive spirit, towards the South then went
the King,
And Savitri follow'd closely, for her husband sorrowing.

YAMA.

"Nay, but go thou back, Savitri, and his funeral rites prepare,
Far as faithful wife should follow, thou hast follow'd, Lady fair."

SAVITRI.

"Wheresoe'er my husband goeth, in the way where he is led,
There Savitri, faithful ever, still unfalteringly will tread ;
For my Penance' sake, and duty to my elders that I show—
Wifely love, and thine own favour, oh ! forbid me not to go !
Him that goes seven paces with thee truthful Sages call a friend,
Thus I claim thy friendship, Yama !—I will speak, do thou attend !
Men, induced by various motives, in the wood their dwelling make,
Some go there for holiest Duty, some for home and shelter's sake ;
Duty leads the Righteous thither, and as holy men account,
Duty is the noblest motive—Duty aye is paramount.
One man's pure Devotion leads us in the forest to remain,
Much availeth high Devotion—let the Good ne'er ask in vain,"*

YAMA.

"Thy sweet speech has charm'd me, Lady ! and a boon to thee I give ;
I will grant whate'er thou askest, saving that thy Lord may live."

SAVITRI.

"In the Hermit-grove, neglected, reft of kingdom, reft of sight,
Let my husband's sire recover vision and his royal right."

YAMA.

"Yea, this boon I grant thee, fairest—it shall be as thou dost pray,
But return thou home, Savitri, lest thou faint upon the way."

* The whole of this passage is excessively obscure ; Savitri appears to found hope of a favourable hearing upon the merits of the royal anchorite, her father-in-law, and to claim a blessing for the whole family on account of the Penance and Devotion of its head.

SAVITRI.

"Can I faint when near my husband? where he goes my path shall be,

I will follow where thou leadest—listen once again to me :
He that to all living creatures nought but loving-kindness shows,
Has the truest, best Religion*—good men pity e'en their foes."

YAMA.

"Sweet as water to the thirsty, Lady! are thy words to me,
Ask again—his life excepted—gladly will I grant it thee."

SAVITRI.

"Heirless is the King, my father—let a hundred sons of fame,
Duly born unto the Monarch, spread the glories of his name."

YAMA.

"Lady! it shall be unto him even as thy wishes are,
But return—thy prayer is granted; Princess, thou hast travell'd far."

SAVITRI.

"'Tis not far, for he is near me—further, further speeds my mind;
Onwards! I will speak, O Yama! let my words a hearing find :—
Resteth more upon the Righteous than on self man's confidence,
Therefore seeketh each the Worthy's friendship and benevolence;
Gladly to the Good and Holy all their trusting love they give,
Boundless is the good man's kindness, for he loveth all that live."

YAMA.

"Thou hast spoken well and wisely—never yet spake woman so;
To my soul thy words are pleasant—ask another boon, and go!"

- * "He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast;
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us—
He made and loveth all."—*Ancient Mariner.*

SAVITRI.

"Grant that many a prince, O Yama ! I to Satyavan may bear,
To uphold his house for ever, mighty, virtuous, and fair."

YAMA.

"Many a son, fair, good, and mighty, Lady ! shall of thee be born,
But return, thy home is distant—faint art thou, and travel-worn."

SAVITRI.

"Nay, the Good ne'er cease well-doing, and they know not weariness ;
Never is their meeting fearful, never is it profitless ;
Great are they—the Sun in heaven guide they by their Truth
and Worth,
And bear up by their Devotion, this vast dwelling-place the Earth ;
Never, when the Good are near them, do the Good faint wearily,
For the Good uphold for ever all that has been and shall be,"*

YAMA.

"Just and sweet thy words are, true one,—ask, and I will not refuse
(So my soul is pleas'd with thee,) any boon that thou shalt choose."

SAVITRI.

"Nought hast thou excepted, Monarch ! in this choice that thou
dost give :
I am dead without *his* presence—let my dearest husband live !
I would spurn all earthly pleasures, spurn all bliss in Heaven above,
Earth can have no raptures for me,—Heaven no joy without my love !"

* "Think ye the spires that glow so bright
In front of yonder setting sun,
Stand by their own unshaken might ?
No—where the upholding grace is won
We dare not ask, nor heaven would tell ;
But sure from many a hidden dell,
From many a rural nook unthought of there,
Rises for that proud world the saints' prevailing prayer."—KEBLE.

Said the King of the Departed, "O Savitri, faithful wife !
 It shall be as thou entreatest—I restore thy husband's life ;
 Centuries shall he live with thee ; o'er his father's kingdom reign,
 And by Sacrifice and Justice, highest fame and glory gain.
 Thou shalt see thy loved ones happy—very blessed shalt thou be,
 For of all the gifts I promised, none shall fail to come to thee."
 Thus the King of Justice ended, and then quickly went his way,
 And the eager Lady hasten'd where her husband's body lay.
 Still upon the ground she found him, by his side she gently bent,
 And upon her faithful bosom, tenderly his head she leant.
 Spake he then to his Savitri, waking up to sense and life,
 Like one who has long been absent, looking fondly on his wife :—
 "Wherefore didst not thou arouse me ? long have I been
 sleeping here ;
 Where is he, that swarthy being, who in awful form stood near ?"

SAVITRI.

"Thou hast slumber'd long, my dearest ! resting on my lap thy head,
 And that mighty God has left us,—Yama, Monarch of the Dead.
 Tell me has thy sleep refresh'd thee ? rise, I pray thee, from
 the ground,
 See ! the night is thickening o'er us, and dark shades are closing
 round."
 Up he rose, by slumber strengthen'd, and now conscious fix'd
 his eye
 On the forest's distant boundaries, and the quarters of the sky.

SATYAVAN.

"O Savitri, dainty-waisted ! from our home I came with thee,
 Here with fruit we fill'd our basket, here, my love, I fell'd the tree ;
 Faint with toil and sudden anguish, sank I sleeping on thy breast,
 But so far do I remember—tell me, if thou canst, the rest ;
 For a man exceeding glorious saw I then, or seem'd to see,
 Say, Savitri, was I dreaming, or was all reality ?"
 She made answer to her husband, "Night's dark shadows round
 us fall,
 When the morrow's light returneth, dearest ! I will tell thee all ;

Up then and away, I pray thee—come unto thy parents, love !
 See ! the sun has long time vanish'd, and the night grows black above ;
 Ravening beasts that roam the forest, for their midnight booty prowl,
 Listen ! they are roaming near us—listen to their angry howl !”

SATYAVAN.

“ All the wood is full of terrors, black with night's thick shades around,
 How shall the long way be traversed, and our homeward path
 be found ?”

SAVITRI.

“ In the wood a tree stood burning, as to-day we hither came,
 Even now the wind hath fann'd it, and I see the flickering flame ;
 Quickly will I bring a firebrand, and a blaze will kindle here,
 See ! this wood is lying ready—grieve no more, my husband dear !
 Weak art thou and worn with suffering, we will rest us here to-night,
 And return, if thou be willing, with the morning's earliest light.”

SATYAVAN.

“ All the pain has left me, dearest ! and my limbs again are strong,
 Let us hasten to my parents—we have loiter'd here too long.
 Never from the Hermit-cottage have I stay'd so long away,
 Sure my woful mother mourns me—mourn'd me ere the close of day,
 With the early morn I left them ; now their hearts are sad with care,
 And my father seeks me sorrowing with the Hermits everywhere.
 Often have they fondly chid me, ‘ Why so late, beloved one !’
 Oh, how great will be their anguish, weeping for their absent son !
 Often have they said unto me, ‘ Child, on thee our lives depend,
 ’Tis by thee we have our being—without thee our lives must end.
 Staff of thy blind aged parents ! all our hoping rests on thee,
 Rests on thee for after-glory, funeral rites, and family.
 Now, e'en now my father questions every dweller in the grove,
 Now he asks of my fond mother, feebly following her love ;
 I must cheer their fainting spirits, and put gladness in their heart,
 Let us haste away, Savitri ! come, my dearest, and depart.”

Quickly at her husband's bidding then arose that Lady fair,
 He threw off the dust that stain'd him, and she bound her flow-
 ing hair ;

Gently by the hand she took him, aiding Satyavan to rise,
 Saying, as she saw him sadly on the burden fix his eyes ;
 "Thou shalt fetch the fruit to-morrow—let the basket be thy care,
 And the axe (for thou art weary) on my shoulder will I bear."
 The other arm she threw around him, fondly on her neck he leant,
 And supporting thus her husband joyfully the Lady went.

VI.

Now the holy Hermit-Monarch had received again his sight,*
 But he wept because his darling came not with the coming night ;
 Absent from their well-belovèd, father—mother—could not rest,
 Through the grove, along the streamlet, sought they weary
 and distrest.

Did they hear a rustling near them, eagerly the mourners cried :—
 "Hark ! our Satyavan is coming, and Savitri by his side ;"
 Heedless of the tangled bushes onwards still their way they sped,
 With their tender feet all wounded, and their minds bewildered.
 But the gentle Hermits found them, and led home the weeping pair,
 And with hopeful words of comfort tenderly relieved their care ;
 There within the cottage sate they, while their spirits were consoled
 By the tales of bygone heroes, and great warrior-kings of old ;
 But again they wept remembering the brave deeds their boy had
 done,

"Where art thou, wife ever faithful ? where art thou, my son, my son ?"
 "Still he lives," cried all the Brâhmans—"let not your sad
 hearts despair."

Oh ! what joy came o'er their spirits ! Satyavân and she stood there !

VII.

Heralds brought next morn the tidings that the king his foe was slain ;
 "Now again let Dyumatsena o'er his faithful subjects reign ;
 Come, great Prince ! thy praise is sounded through our town in
 every street,
 Come, and sit for years unnumber'd on thy father's fathers' seat."
 Honour'd by the holy Brâhmans, honour meet to them he paid,
 And departed for his city, as his loving subjects pray'd ;

* As Yama had promised at Savitri's prayer.

Carried in a fair soft litter 'mid the people's welcoming,
Came the Queen and good Savitri to the City of the King ;
Gladly did the Priests anoint him Sovereign of that kingdom fair,*
And had Satyavan proclaimed Royal Prince and Ruling Heir. †
Time flew by—from fair Savitri, as the mighty God had sworn,
Many a prince, fair, good and mighty, spreading far her fame,
was born ;

And she had a hundred brothers, of great majesty and fame,
Given to the Madras' monarch, to uphold his royal name ;
Thus herself, her father, mother, from distress and wo saved she,
Saved her husband, and his parents, and his coming family.
Whoso hears this best of stories of Savitri, Faithful Wife,
May his every wish be granted ! happiness be his for life !

* Thus David was anointed a *second time*, as King of Israel ; and Cœur de Lion, on his return from the Holy Land, caused himself to be crowned anew,—“as if he intended,” says Hume, “by that ceremony, to reinstate himself in his throne, and to wipe off the ignominy of his captivity.”

† Yuva-rāja—literally, *young king*—the Heir Apparent associated to the throne, like the *Cæsars* of the later Roman Empire.

THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN.

THE following wild tale, extracted also from the Mahābhārata, that inexhaustible storehouse of mythological and historical legends, relates the recovery of the Amrit, or Drink of Immortality, which had been lost, together with other treasures, in the waters of the Deluge, of which the Hindus have preserved a tradition, resembling in several remarkable instances the Hebrew account of that event.

For council deep they all appear'd,
The Dwellers of the Sky,
Where Meru, King of Mountains, rear'd
His pinnacles on high ;
How glorious in the nations' sight
Flash'd forth his golden rays,
And scorn'd the Sun's unclouded light
With yet more dazzling blaze !

There trees and herbs and countless flowers
Of heavenly virtue grew,
And through the cool and shady bowers
Sang birds of gorgeous hue.
They met for solemn council there
The Wise Ones, and the Strong,
"Say, how may we our loss repair—
The Amrit, mourn'd so long ?"

Then Vishnu in his wisdom cried,
"Ye mighty Gods, arise !
Deep hid beneath the whelming tide
The Heavenly Nectar lies ;
Untiringly in ceaseless whirl
Churn ye the vasty Ocean,
And herbs of power and jewels hurl
Into the wild commotion.

"Vex ye the surges in your strength,
Stir them with ceaseless toil,
So shall the troubled sea at length
Yield back the precious spoil."
He spake ; and swift at his behest
With eager might they strain
To tear up Mandara's haughty crest,
And heave him from the plain.

But all their power was defied
By the unshaken hill ;
Vain every effort they applied,
Their strength was fruitless still.
"O great Lord Vishnu ! hear us now !"
Thus pray'd the Heavenly Band,
"O Brahma ! Hearer of the Vow !
Lay to thy mighty hand !"

Then Brahma of the Lotus Eyes
And deep unsearch'd Mind,
And Vishnu, terrible and wise,
To their request inclined ;
They bade Ananta, Serpent King,
Rise from his Ocean home,
That Hill of Glory down to fling
Far in the flashing foam.

Now wo to Mandara's mountain !
His days of pride are o'er ;
In woods, by gurgling fountain,
The sweet birds sing no more !
"Come, let us churn the Ocean !"
Thus cried the Gods around—
"For by the ceaseless motion
The Amrit will be found."

Then did the King of Waters crave
The wondrous task to share,
"For he was strong beneath the wave
High Mandara's weight to bear."
Then took the Gods that Hill of Pride
Their churning-stick to be,
And for a turning-strap they tied
The great snake Vasuki.

Uniting with the Serpent King
Labour'd the Gods amain ;
Asurs and Surs, all strove to bring
The Amrit back again.
By the Snake's head Ananta stood,
And pull'd with matchless strength ;
The Gods beyond the moving flood
Dragg'd back his coil'd length.

Then from the mouth of Vasuki
Roll'd clouds of smoke and flame,
Like scorching storm-blasts furiously
The stifling vapours came.
And ceaselessly a rain of flowers
From the fair mountain's brow
Fell softly down in fragrant showers,
And veil'd the hosts below.

Like roaring of a tempest-cloud
The deafening thunder crash'd ;
The sound of Ocean was as loud,
To furious raging lash'd ;
Unnumber'd creatures of the Deep
Died in the troubled Sea ;
And thundering down from Mandara's steep
Fell many a lofty tree.

From branches against branches dash'd
Rose the red flames on high,
And flickering round the mountain flash'd
Like lightnings o'er the sky.
The dwellers of the ancient woods
Felt the remorseless power,
Rush'd vainly to the steaming floods
Scorch'd by the fiery shower ;

Lions and elephants in herds
By blinding terror driven—
With scath'd wings the beauteous birds
No more might soar to heaven ;
But Indra on the toil and pain
Look'd pitying from on high,
And bade a cloud of gentle rain
Come softly down the sky.

Then from each wounded herb and tree
The precious balsam pour'd,
And milk-white roll'd the foaming Sea,
With wondrous juices stored.
" O Brahma ! weak and worn are We ;
Hear us," they cried, " again,
For ceaselessly and fruitlessly
We lash the furious main.

"Our souls are fainting, and our strength
Fails in the ceaseless strife,
O tell us, shall we gain at length
The drink of endless life?"
"Great Vishnu ! help the toiling band,"
The mighty Brahma said—
And straightway at the high command
He promised matchless aid.

"To all I give resistless might
Who stir the foaming Sea ;
Still in the glorious work unite.
Till ours the guerdon be."
And with one heart, and with one will,
They lash'd the raging Ocean,
And furious fast, and wilder still
Arose the fierce commotion.

Then lo ! the Moon all cold and bright
Rose from the troubled Sea,
And following in her robes of light
Appear'd the beauteous Sri ;
The Heavenly Horse, and Sura * rose,
And Kaustubha, the Gem,
Whose ever-beaming lustre glows
In Vishnu's Diadem.

Last of the train, Dhanwantari
To their glad sight was given,
The Amrit in a bowl had he,
The Mystic Drink of Heaven.
Then loud and long a joyous sound
Rang through the startled sky ;
Hail to the Amrit, lost and found !"
A thousand voices cry.

* Wine, personified.

But from the wondrous Churning steam'd
A poison fierce and dread,
Burning like fire, where'er it stream'd
Thick noisome mists were spread;
The wasting venom onwards went
And fill'd the Worlds with fear,
Till Brahma to their misery bent
His gracious pitying ear;
And Siva those destroying streams
Drank up at Brahma's beck,—
Still in thy throat the dark flood gleams,
God of the Azure Neck!



SAKONTALÂ.

I.

GAY and glad the hunters gather'd in the pomp of their array,
When the mighty King Dushyanta sought the wood at early day ;
Elephants and steeds unnumber'd, footmen, charioteers had he,
Royal was the troop around him, gay with all their bravery.
Foresters with knives and lances, clubs and maces round him pour'd,
Men of war with spear and javelin swell'd the triumph of their lord ;
High above the loud huzzaing conch-blasts echoed out afar,
With the elephant's deep roaring, and the rattling of the car.
Warriors with their various weapons shone in manifold array,
Battle-cries and acclamation mingled with the horse's neigh,
As the goodly troop swept onwards, at the glory of the King
Merry shouts rang out around him, and a noise of triumphing ;
Whilst upon the noble hero, winner of his own high fame,
From the lofty palace turrets look'd down many a lovely dame ;
In their wondering eyes the Monarch, mighty Queller of his Foes,
Was as Indra, God of Thunder, in whose hand the red bolt glows ;
" Prince of men ! in battle dreaded ; Warrior ! when thy wrath is hot,
They that fight against thy power, feel thy strong arm and are not !"
Thus the women sang in triumph praises of admiring love,
And upon the mighty Monarch rain'd fair flowers from above.
Every tongue was fain to laud him—Brâhmans bless'd him where
they stood,
As the King, for hunting eager, went rejoicing to the wood.
Mounted in a gold-bright chariot swiftly rattling o'er the ground,
The great Prince made earth reëcho, and fill'd heaven with the sound ;
Gay as Paradise before him rose a grove exceeding fair,
The wood-apple fruited bravely, and all pleasant trees were there ;

Far, for many a league extended, no man dwelt beneath its shade,
There rough mountain-stones lay scatter'd, and no joyous fountains
play'd ;

Wi'd beasts lurk'd in its recesses, 'twas the kingly lion's home,
Harbour'd there all savage monsters through the forest-wild that roam ;
Tiger among men, Dushyanta beat up every secret dell
With his hunting train around him—many a beast before him fell ;
Many an arrow shot the Monarch, many a tiger laid he low,
Smiting every beast that ventured within range of his good bow ;
Some with the sharp sword he slaughter'd as they hurried blindly near,
Now with darts the Best of Darters sent to death the flying deer.
Driven from their secret dwellings fled the forest-lords afar,
Fled before the Royal Hunter and his mighty men of war.
Loudly mourn'd they in their sorrow banish'd from their haunts of old,
In confusion wandering widely—dead their leaders strong and bold ;
To the dry brooks turn'd they thirsting, rack'd by anguish and despair,
And, their weary spirits fainting, sank down wounded, senseless,
there.

Sated with the chase the hunters sought to feed upon the game,
Piled the firebrands, quickly kindling, and made ready o'er the flame ;
Eagerly they ate the venison—every hunter had his share,
When all suddenly in fury, as they linger'd feasting there,
Savage elephants burst on them, mighty, wounded, dropping blood,
Trampling hundreds down beneath them, rushing from the thickest
wood.

II.

But the grove could please no longer when the lordly beasts were
slain,

And the Hunter left the covert crowded with his archer-train.
Thousands though the King had slaughter'd, all unsated yet was he ;
He would seek another forest, bent on noble venery.

Nigh for thirst and hunger fainting, through the wood he drove in
haste,

And beyond its cooling shelter came unto a lonely waste ;
On he sped—the mighty Hunter—through the dreary solitude,
And the long long desert traversed, came he to another wood.

'Twas a grove to make the spirit swell with rapture at the sight—
Here and there rose Hermit-dwellings in that Garden of Delight ;
Soft, cool breezes play'd there ever—flowery shrubs threw scent
around,

With fresh grass that spot was pleasant, and all herbs that grew on
ground ;

Sweet was all the grove with music, and fine birds' clear melody,
And the shrill cicalas mingled their glad voice from every tree ;
Over all reign'd joy and gladness—cool and pleasant was the shade
Which the trees, to heaven upspringing, with their fair long
branches made ;

In that lovely garden flourish'd not a bush without its fruit,
Not a shrub without its flower, none where humming-bees were mute ;
The Great Archer's soul was gladden'd at the beauty of the wood,
Song-birds, trees, and flowers charm'd him as beneath the shade he
stood.

As the blossom-laden branches wanton'd gently with the breeze,
Flowers of every form and colour rain'd down ceaseless from the
trees ;

Bravely sprung those branches waving in their glorious array,
And the voice of birds' sweet music warbled forth from every spray.
In the boughs, with flowery burden bending lowly to the ground,
Humming-bees, for honey eager, ever made a pleasant sound ;
Whilst a cool breeze, fresh and gentle, wafting scented pollen by,
Wandering round the trees, kept playing as in dalliance amorously.
As he look'd upon the garden with such dainty beauties drest,
Lo ! a Hermitage before him rose, of all the loveliest ;
Here and there blazed sacred fire ; sweet birds sang within the shade—
The great King bow'd down in homage, and all due obeisance made ;
Beds of flowers, and Fire-Temples, decked that pleasant Hermitage,
Holy men dwelt there together—many a mighty Saint and Sage ;
Mâlini bright streamlet, gaily flash'd along her silver tide,
Glades of fresh and cooling verdure gleaming fair along her side ;
As the mighty Warrior enter'd, joy o'er all his senses stole—
'Twas so like the Gods' own Heaven, lovely, ravishing the soul ;
For around the holy dwelling—such the charm of that pure grove—
Savage beasts forgot their fury, and their anger turn'd to love.

Winding round the Hermits' garden he espied a brooklet fair,
 Given, as 'twere a nursing mother, for all living creatures there ;
 Gemm'd with many a pleasant island, the wild mallard's reedy home,
 Bearing on its curling ripples painted flowers and dancing foam ;
 There roam'd the elephant and tiger—there the lion and the bear,
 But the calm was broken only by the whispering voice of prayer.
 Holy Kâsyapa, great-minded, dwelt there by the silver flood,
 On the banks of that sweet river the Arch-Saint's fair cottage stood ;
 With the bright stream round the dwelling, so enchanting was the
 view

Of green shores and lovely islets, that the Hunter nearer drew ;
 Stay'd he all his men and horses at the entrance of the wood,
 Where with elephants and footmen crowded thick his chariots stood.
 "Now the unpassion'd Sage I visit," said the Monarch to his men,—
 Kâsyapa, the sainted Hermit,—stay ye till I come again."
 Rang out shrilly as he enter'd the wild peacock's merry cries,
 From a garden deck'd with beauty like Kuvera's * Paradise ;
 Fled away his thirst and hunger at the passing lovely sight,
 And o'er all the Prince's spirit stole unspeakable delight.
 The great Queller of his Foemen view'd with transport here and there
 Holy Brâhmans, good and pious, ever given to silent prayer ;
 When he saw the glorious honours to the God's fair Temples given,
 Fill'd with trancing joy the Monarch thought himself in Indra's
 heaven.

III. •

When the wondering King had enter'd Kâsyapa's fair Hermitage,
 Eagerly he look'd around him, but saw not the holy Sage ;
 Empty seem'd the Hermit's cottage—then with rais'd voice the King,
 "Ho there ! who's within ?" exclaiming, made the grove and garden
 ring.

Then a maid like Sî for beauty, heavenly-bright and fair as she,
 Came forth from an inner chamber, cloth'd as a Devotee ;
 "Thou art welcome, mighty Monarch ! welcome ! cried the black-
 eyed maid,
 And she did him honour duly—lowly her obeisance paid ;

* The God of Wealth.

Ask'd she of his health and welfare, having led him to a seat,
 Brought wild honey for the stranger, and fresh water for his feet.
 When the kingly guest was seated, with due reverence waiting still,
 Said the maiden good and lovely, "Monarch! let me know thy will."
 Made he answer to the damsel, gazing on her beauty rare,
 Her dear mouth so sweetly smiling, and her form so passing fair :
 "Came I to the sainted Kanva * homage reverently to pay,
 Where is he—the great—the holy ? whither gone ? fair maiden, say !"

SAKONTALÂ.

"Seeking wild fruits in the forest has he left the Hermitage,
 Rest thee here awhile, O Monarch ! thou shalt see the holy Sage."

Spake he to the maid all glorious in her loveliness of face,
 Radiant in her youthful beauty, with the charm of modest grace :—
 "Who art thou, O dainty-waisted ! dwelling in this holy shade,
 Bright with beauty and all goodness ? whence art thou, O lovely maid ?
 For the sight of thee has taken all the heart from out my breast,
 I would know thy birth and lineage ; tell me, O thou loveliest !"

Thus within the Sage's dwelling spake Dushyanta, mighty King ;
 Then replied the modest maiden in sweet accents answering :—
 "With a sire of high Devotion, good and holy, live I here
 Great-soul'd steadfast, skill'd in Duty,—Kanva is my father dear."

THE KING.

"He—the Mighty—honour'd widely—Saint of high felicity,
 Hath been chaste and holy ever, and no woman's love knows he ;
 Fair one ! how art thou his daughter ? Virtue's self might fall away,
 But the Saint would ne'er do folly—Who art thou ? sweet maiden, say !"

SAKONTALÂ.

"Hear then how I am the daughter, Monarch, of the holy Sage,
 Hear then how the mighty Kanva once declared my parentage ;
 For a Saint who came unto us ask'd great Kanva of my birth,
 And he heard this wondrous story from the Sage, great Lord of
 Earth !

* Another name of the celebrated Saint Kâsyapa.

By his sad and awful Penance many a long and weary day,
 Once the mighty Viswamitra fill'd great Indra with dismay—
 Thus to Menaka in terror spake the God disconsolate :—
 'Help, or soon the Saint will hurl me headlong from my high estate ;
 Fair one ! of all Nymphs of Heaven thou art best beyond compare,
 With thine own bright beauty aid me ! listen, Lady, to my prayer !
 Glorious as the Sun through Penance Viswamitra, mighty Saint,
 Waxing stronger, ever stronger, makes my soul for terror faint.
 Go in thy resistless beauty—arm thee with thy matchless wiles,
 Thy love-darting words and glances, and with all thy dearest smiles ;
 Turn him from his awful Penance, breathe upon him soft desire,
 Make him sin for my salvation, and set all his soul on fire !'
 'Ah ! I fear,' the Nymph made answer, 'fear the fury of his rage,
 Terrible (and that thou knowest) is the anger of the Sage ;
 At his majesty and Penance, at his wrath and mightiness,
 Even thou, great Indra, tremblest—shall I fear his anger less ?
 He could burn the Worlds with fire, lofty Meru's hill uproot,
 And make Earth to her foundation shake beneath his furious foot.
 How can such as I come nigh him, bright through Penance, mighty-
 soul'd,
 How accost the holy Hermit, pure, with every sense controll'd ?
 Yet—for thou hast spoken Indra ! and I will not disobey—
 Come, bethink thee how with safety I may go on this my way ;
 Send the amorous Wind-God with me, mighty Ruler of the Skies,
 And let Kâma,* willing comrade, aid my hardy enterprise ;
 Let a warm breeze, perfume-laden, blowing softly from the grove,
 Shed his wanton breath around us, as I woo the Saint to love.'

IV.

"Thus she spake to mighty Indra ; and the Sovereign of the Skies
 Promised a return in safety back to him and Paradise ;
 Flew away the Nymph of Heaven, her bright tresses unconfined
 Floating o'er her lovely bosom, dallying with the wanton wind ;

* The Indian Cupid.

Down the airy way she darted, and beheld the glorious Sage
Purified by Fires of Penance, in his own fair Hermitage ;
As she nearer came, and nearer, moving on in amorous play
The Wind-God behind her following, stole her moon-bright robe
away ;—

Swiftly to regain her mantle flew the Fair One down to earth,
Glancing at the amorous felon with a smile of frolic mirth ;
There before the wondering Hermit, peerless-fair and garmentless,
Stood confest the Nymph of Heaven, clad in all her loveliness.
Drunk was all his soul, and ravish'd, as he gazed upon her charms,
Love and Menakâ had conquer'd, and the Saint was in her arms.
There in love and all its pleasures flew the happy months away,
To the trancëd Hermit seem'd they but one short delicious day ;
Dearly loved, and dearly loving, heedlessly thus lived the Pair,
Till sweet Menakâ was mother of an infant heavenly fair ;
Where on great Himâlaya's summit Mâlinî's clear sources rise,
Cruelly she left her daughter and went back to Paradise ;
There a prey to savage lions, helpless in the forest-wild
Pitying vultures saw her lying, and kept guard around the child.
Tended by the birds I found her lying in the wild wood drear,
Raised her, brought her to my cottage, made her mine own daughter
dear ;

And Sakontalâ I call'd her, for Sakontas* round her stood,
Tenderly to guard the infant from the dangers of the wood.
Thus then, O thou best of Brâhmnans, mine own daughter dear is she.
And Sakontalâ has ever as her father honour'd me.'
Thus unto the holy Brâhman sainted Kanva told my birth,
And for Kanva's daughter know me, O thou noble Lord of Earth."

V.

"Doubtless thou art royal, Lady ! as thou tellest," said the King ;
"Be my bride, thou dainty-waisted ! say, what offering shall I bring ?
Queenly robes and precious bracelets—chains of gold for that dear
neck—
Rarest ear-rings for thee, fair one ! and bright gems thy hair to deck—
Gold and deerskin rugs I give thee ; all my riches shall be thine ;
Listen to my prayer, sweet Lady ! share my kingdom and be mine.

* Name of the Indian Vultures.

Fear not—in Gandharba* wedlock be my bride, thou loveliest !
For 'tis written, of all bridals the Gandharba is the best."

"Soon," said she, "my holy father wild-fruits from the wood will bring,

Stay, and if it be thy pleasure, ask me of my sire, great King."

"Nay, but wed me now, sweet maiden," said the Prince entreatingly,
Mighty love will brook no tarrying—all my soul is given to thee ;
Thine own kith and keeper art thou, for no kinsman dost thou know,
Of thyself, O fairest Lady, thy dear self on me bestow.

Eightfold are the forms of Wedlock that great Manu order'd,
For the Warrior† the Gandharba is the best, himself hath said ;
Take me in Gandharba wedlock—dearest ! why art thou afraid ?
'Tis the best, the holiest union—loving youth with loving maid."

SAKONTALÂ.

"King! if this be right and honest, make a covenant with me,
If, of mine own self the master,‡ thus I give that self to thee.
Should I bear a son unto thee, make him Partner of thy throne,
Ruling Heir of all thy kingdom, next to thee and thee alone."

"Yea, I swear to thee, bright smiler," answer'd eagerly the King,
And my Queen to mine own city, as 'tis fitting, will I bring."
Then, as is ordain'd the custom, by the hand he took his bride,
And the kingly husband couch'd him by the faultless maiden's side ;
Fondly did her lord console her—Lady † I will send for thee,
To conduct thee to my city, men and cars and cavalry."
Thus he promis'd the Lady. As his homeward way he went,
On great Kâsyapa the Hermit, the King's troubled thoughts were bent,—

"When he knows our secret wedding will the Hermit angry be,
And pour out his indignation on the Lady and on me ?"

* A prescribed Form of Marriage, which requires only love and mutual agreement.

† *The Kshatriya*—a man of the second, or military and regal class.

‡ Thus Portia says :—

"——But now I was the *lord*

Of this fair mansion, *master* of my servants."

Soon return'd the saintly Kanva to his lovely Hermitage,
 But for shame the modest Lady went not out to meet the Sage ;
 Yet he thus address'd her kindly—nought was hidden from his
 sight,

Gifted with all godlike knowledge, and an eye of heavenly light :—
 "Secret was thy marriage, daughter ! yet no folly hast thou done,
 For the Warrior, the Gandharba is the fittest union ;
 When a youthful Pair unite them, willing, loving, He and She,
 Without Veda-texts in wedlock, without witness secretly.
 King Dushyanta is thy husband, and his love will make thee blest,
 He is righteous, and great-minded, and of men the worthiest ;
 And, Sakontalâ, the offspring that thy lord hath given thee,
 High and mighty, noble-hearted, famous in the world shall be ;
 Long shall he enjoy in glory all this sea-encompass'd land,
 And stretch out to other regions his strong arm and conquering
 hand."

Then she eased him of his burden—wash'd the weary Hermit's feet,
 And spake thus when he had rested from the toil and mid-day heat :—
 "Now I beg a favour of thee—listen to thy daughter's voice,
 And show kindness to Dushyanta, the dear husband of my choice."

KANVA.

"I will bless the noble Monarch for thy sake, my daughter fair ;
 Say what boon thou chooseth for him—gladly will I grant thy
 prayer."

Truth and Justice begg'd she for him, and besought the Saint to bless
 King Dushyanta and his people with all peace and happiness.

VI.

Time had flown by since the Monarch the sweet maiden woo'd
 and won,

And Sakontalâ was mother of a fair and beauteous son ;
 Dawning majesty and splendour shone out from his infant face ;
 With high virtues was he gifted, noble mind, and charming grace.
 Duly were the sacred Birth-rites by great Kanva's pious care
 All perform'd upon the Infant, with each holy text and prayer.

There in strength and grace increasing grew he to six years of age,
Like a child of the Immortals, in the Saint's fair Hermitage ;
Tall was he—limb'd like a lion ; pointed were his teeth and white ;
Mark'd his hands with lines of fortune ; broad his front and great
his might ;

To the trees around the cottage strongly bound the mighty Child
Lions, elephants, and tigers, fiercest creatures of the wild.
'Twas his sport to ride the monsters, taming all with wondrous skill,
Savage lions fear'd his power, and fell tigers learn'd his will.
When he saw the Boy's great glory and the marvel of his might,
Said the Sage unto Lady, " Now thy son must claim his right,"
Call'd he then to his disciples, " Make ye ready for the road,
Take the boy and Lady-mother to her royal lord's abode."
Straightway then the youths departed at the Master-Saint's
command,

And before them went the Lady and her young child hand in hand ;
From the well-known forest went she with her darling at her side,
Oh ! she was a fair-brow'd creature, god-like he and lotus-eyed.
To Dushyanta's palace came they, and before her lord stood she,
And the boy before with father bright with sunlike majesty ;
Then when they had told their message, the disciples of the Sage
Took their homeward way together back to Kanva's Hermitage ;
But Sakontalâ bow'd lowly and all fitting reverence paid,
As she stood before the Monarch—and 'twas thus the Lady said :—
' Mighty Lord ! receive thine offspring, of thy throne the Ruling Heir ;
This the son thou gavest to me—brave is he and heavenly fair ;
Come, remember now thy promise, as thy word thou didst engage,
Monarch ! when we loved and wedded, there in Kanva's Hermitage."

" False one, nay, I never knew thee," was his answer to the Dame ;
Say, who art thou, frail and perjured, lost to virtue, dead to shame ?"

Scarce she heard the Monarch's answer ; in unspeakable distress
Stood she smitten through with anguish, as a column motionless ;
Close her swelling lips then press'd she—on the King glanced
angrily,

Scorching all the soul within him with the lightning of her eye ;
But in woe and indignation though she hid for shame her face,
Still the meed of long Devotion lost she not, her charming grace ;

With her heart awhile she communed, then her angry silence broke,
 Sternly look'd upon her husband, and in grief and anger spoke :—
 “Darest thou so boldly, Monarch ! thine own wedded wife deny ?
 How canst thou endure, unblushing, like a base-born wretch, to lie ?
 What is true in this my story, what is false, thine heart doth know ;
 Be a just and faithful witness—save me from this shame and woe !
 He that of himself speaks falsely 'gainst his soul does wickedly,
 Lying to his own perdition, guilty of all sin is he ;
 All alone thyself thou thinkest, knowing not thy bosom's lord,
 By whom all thy sin is noted, and thy secret guilt abhorr'd ;
 Sayeth in his heart the wicked, No one knoweth of my sin—
 Yea, the Gods around him see it, and the Spirit from within.
 Wherefore in contempt, O Monarch ! dost thou cast thine eye on me ?
 Not in secret am I speaking—hear me in this company !
 Husband ! shouldst thou drive me from thee thus unheard,
 dishonourèd,

Still thy sin will fruit thee sorrow hundred-fold upon thy head.
 Wife, a name is high and holy—worthy *she* the name of Wife,
 She that is his children's mother—she that is her husband's life ;
 One half of the Man the Wife is, and his truest dearest friend,
 Spring of Love and Wealth and Virtue, and high bliss that ne'er
 can end ;

Happy, happy are the Wedded—Holy Rites and home's sweet cares,
 High prosperity and fortune, love and blessedness are theirs ;
 Wives console their lords in anguish, whisper hope in their distress,
 Fathers they in heavenward duties—mothers in their tenderness ;
 They will cheer their husbands' journey through the hard rough
 ways of life,

The best hope and consolation, the best refuge is the Wife ;
 She that loveth well will follow the dear lord she honoureth
 Through all changes of existence, woe and misery and death ;
 Is she reft from his fond bosom, there she waits for him above ;
 If he dies, her life is hateful till she follows to her love ;
 Therefore men, O noble Monarch ! wedded love so highly prize,
 For they gain a wife to bless them here and then in Paradise.
 Sweet as water to the traveller faint with heat and weariness,
 Is a wife's refreshing comfort in the hour of man's distress.

No, not e'en when wroth, to women should a man unkindness show,
 From whom Virtue and Affection, and Love's dearest raptures flow.
 A new self by self begotten is a son,—the Wise have said ;
 Let thy fruitful wife be ever as thy mother honoured.
 Oh ! how blessed is the father, when he sees his now-born son,
 As it were his own face mirror'd ; he is saved and Heaven is won ;
 When all dusty, crawling slowly, the belov'd darling boy
 Comes and kisses his own father, who can tell that father's joy ?
 Here thy son is looking on thee—Monarch ! how canst thou despise
 This appeal of thine own offspring, the mute prayer of those dear
 eyes ?

Soft the touch of precious raiment, pleasant woman's kisses are,
 Pleasant is the touch of water, but a son's is sweeter far.
 Father, touch thine own fair offspring, kiss that soft inviting face,
 There can be no touch more pleasant than a darling son's embrace ;
 Mighty Queller of thy Foemen ! this the son I bore to thee,
 I have brought him up to cheer thee, and his father's pride to be ;
 Live ! my son, to years unnumber'd ! peace and happiness be thine,
 For on thee my life is resting, and the glories of my line ;
 Doubtless, King, thou art his father ; look upon thy likeness here,
 Thus would thine own image mirror'd on a lake's fair breast appear.
 Following once the chase thou camest to my father's Hermitage,
 Secretly didst woo and wed me there, a maid of tender age ;
 On Himālaya's lofty summit, of a Nymph of Heaven born,
 By my cruel-hearted mother was I left a babe forlorn ;
 Oh ! what sin has been committed in a former life by me,
 That I thus was left in childhood, and am now disgraced by thee ?
 To my home, by thee deserted, uncomplaining will I go,
 Only recognise my darling, and thine own dear offspring know."
 Thus she spake unto the Monarch ; harsh and stern was his reply,
 When there came a voice unto him, heavenly-sweet, from out
 the sky :—

" Yea, her tale is true, Dushyanta ! of thy Lady think no scorn,
 Duly was the maiden wedded, and to thee this child was born."
 Wondrous glad he heard the message, welcoming the heavenly
 sound ;
 Spake he to the priests in transport, and high Ministers around :—

"Listen to the Gods' own utterance, Priests and Nobles every one,
 Now I recognise my offspring, and receive mine own dear son."
 Then the father's holy duties he perform'd upon the boy
 With all care and fond affection, and with all a father's joy ;
 On the boy's head his was rested ; round the child his arms were
 flung,

While the Brâhmans did him honour, and the Bards his praises sung.
 Then he turn'd him to the Lady—all high honours duly paid—
 And thus comforting her gently, kindly, tenderly he said :—
 "Secret was our love and wedlock, seen by none, my Lady dear !
 Sternly thus did I deny thee to preserve thine honour clear ;
 These have heard the voice of Heaven, and my wedded Queen will
 own,

And our son shall be anointed Heir and Partner of my throne ;
 And in thy hot anger, Lady ! the harsh words that thou hast said,
 Shall, for the great love I bear thee, be no more remembered."
 Thus the King, the great Dushyanta, spake unto his Lady fair ;
 Dainty food he bade them bring her, and a robe a Queen should wear.
 Bharata he call'd his offspring, and anointed him to be
 Ruling Heir of all his kingdom with divided sovereignty ;
 The young Prince his realm extended by the strength of his right
 hand,

Great and glorious was the ruler, happy and secure his land ;
 By his sword were mighty Monarchs forced his power to confess—
 Well he loved the path of Virtue, of fair Truth and Righteousness.
 O'er all lands the Prince extended his high fame and majesty,
 Offering a host of victims to the Gods unceasingly.
 He perform'd the Aswamedha*—the best honour Prince can crave,
 And a holy gift to Kanva gold in untold millions gave.

* "The actual or emblematic sacrifice of a horse. This sacrifice was one of the highest order, and, performed a hundred times, entitled the sacrificer to the dominion of *Swarga*, or Paradise ; it appears to have been originally typical ; the horse and other animals being simply bound during the performance of certain ceremonies ; the actual sacrifice is an introduction of a later period."

From this Bharata* the glories of the Bhârat lineage came,
As from him all those before him, and all after bear the name ;
A long line of noble Princes to the mighty King were given,
Famed for every royal virtue, glorious as the Gods in Heaven.

* The *Mahâbhârata*, or *Great Bharatêid*, derives its name from this Prince, the ancestor of the heroes whose contests form its main subject.

NALA.

THE following brief extract from the beautiful and interesting Episode of Nala and Damayanti—one of the most charming stories in the Mahābhārata—which has been so excellently translated by Dean Milman, is not selected here for any peculiar poetical merit it possesses; but it is at least curious as affording an illustration of the extravagant height to which the love of play was sometimes carried by the ancient Indians; a passion which raged as fiercely in the sun-bright cities of Hindustan, as in the gloomy forests of Germany, where, as we are told by Tacitus, when all else was lost, personal liberty was staked upon the hazard of a cast, and the loser, although he might be the younger and the stronger man, would voluntarily submit to slavery, and suffer himself to be bound and sold by his successful opponent.

The story is this—Nala, King of Nishada, had been publicly chosen by the lovely princess Damayanti for her husband, and had by his deserved good fortune incurred the envy and hatred of the vindictive demon Kali, who determined to effect his ruin; he accordingly enters into the Prince, perverts his mind, and urges him to play at dice with his brother Pushkara.

LONG for gold and precious jewels, robes and chariots, they play'd,
Nala still possess'd by Kali, still by Kali was betray'd;
Dear familiar friends besought him, gently blamed him in despair,
Vain was every fond entreaty, vain was every tear and prayer.
Lo! to turn him from his madness all the citizens of name,
And his honour'd men of Council, to the Monarch's palace came.
Then 'twas told to Damayanti, Lady! all the subjects wait
On high business with King Nala—even now they are at the gate.
Said the Lady to her husband, (all distraught with woe was she,)
"King! thy councillors and subjects have a word to say to thee—
Deign to see them, O, my Nala! let them not beseech in vain;"
Thus with many a tear of sorrow cried the Queen again, again.

But he made no answer to her ; vain were all her deep-drawn sighs,
 Vain the tear-floods from the fountains of the Lady's lovely eyes.
 Then the councillors and subjects, sad with woe and bitter shame,
 " 'Tis not He "— exclaim'd in sorrow, and went back the way they
 came.

Still play'd Pushkara and Nala—still the King by luck was cross'd ;
 Many a month the contest lasted—still the madden'd Nala lost.

* * * * *

On they play'd with changeless fortune—ere the eager game was
 done,

Nala's Kingdom and his riches all by Pushkara were won ;
 Smiled he on the hapless Nala, of his wealth, his all bereft,
 " Why does not the play continue ? Come, what treasure hast thou
 left ?

Damayanti still is left thee, still thy Queen remainth free,
 Kingdom, gold, and precious jewels, all are forfeited to me ;
 Play we then for her, O Nala ! Damayanti be the stake."
 Nala's heart was rent with anguish, yet no word the Monarch spake,
 But he cast one glance upon him full of anguish and despair,
 Stripping off the decorations which the Prince was wont to wear.
 Scantly clad in one poor garment from his palace went the King,
 In one robe the Lady follow'd, 'mid the people's sorrowing.

~ The hapless Pair wander in the forest, where Nala instigated by the demon
 Kali, deserts his wearied sleeping wife, and leaves her exposed to all the
 perils of the wood. Strong "in the pride of her purity," she journeys on
 triumphant over all the dangers that assail her, and at length finds a
 hospitable reception in the palace of the Queen of a distant City. Nala
 engages himself as Charioteer to a Prince, at whose Court, after his due
 share of adventures, he had arrived ; and after a length of time being
 restored to his faithful wife, freed from the power of Kali, and fortified with a
 preternatural amount of skill in gaming, he returns to his former Capital to
 win back his possessions from Pushkara.

Swiftly onwards sped the Monarch—swiftly in his wrath came he,
 Causing the Great Earth to tremble, for he drove so furiously.
 " Pushkara ! " the Prince cried loudly, as he came within the door,
 " Pushkara ! I've gain'd great riches—come, and let us play once
 more !

Damayanti, gold, and jewels—all I have—the stake I lay;
Be the Kingdom thy deposit—play we for our lives to-day.
If thou win a Kingdom, riches, precious jewels, sums of gold,
His revenge in play thou owest, is a law ordain'd of old:
Fight we then in single combat, if to play thou dost refuse;
Game of war, or game of dicing—one or other must thou choose.
Sages say, Win back thy Kingdom by all methods from thy foe:
Thou hast my paternal City: throw the dice or bend the bow!"
Pushkara received him gladly, all his heart was fill'd with mirth,
Victory he thought was certain, Spake he to the Lord of Earth:—
"Joy! that thou hast wealth, O Nala! ne'er the game do I decline,

Gladly thy revenge I give thee—Damayanti will be mine!
Deck'd with all thy jewels, Nala! shall she stand, my lovely prize,
Like the Nymphs that wait in Heaven on the Ruler of the Skies.
I have look'd for thee, my brother! I have long'd to see this day;
Sweeter far with friends, dear Nala! than with enemies to play.
Joy will fill my soul within me when I've won thy lovely bride,
Long has she possess'd my spirit—never shall she quit my side."
Angrily did Nala hear him; scarce could he his wrath restrain,
But he check'd his rising passion, or the babbler he had slain;
Thus to Pushkara he answer'd, forcing an unwilling smile,
Fury raging in his spirit, flashing from his eye the while:—
"Come, the game! the game! delay not; give this idle babbling o'er.
Soon my victory will grieve thee; thou wilt boast thee then no more."

Then play'd Pushkara with Nala at the angry Prince's call,
And he lost his Kingdom, riches, jewels, gold, himself, and all.
Loud laugh'd Nala in his triumph, thus to Pushkara he cried:—
"Mine is now again my Kingdom—Damayanti still my bride;
Ne'er on her, thou abject Monarch! shall thy lordly eye be cast,
Henceforth thou shalt be her bondsman; her's art thou, and all thou hast.

Yet (for well I know *thy* power did not triumph over me,
But 'twas Kali, though thou know not, gave to thee that victory,)
I will spare thee in my mercy—not on thee the wrath shall fall
That another stirr'd within me, freely I forgive thee all;

Back thy forfeit life I give thee—spend it at thine own free will,
And thine own, thy just possessions,—take them and enjoy them
still ;
Still my friendship shall be with thee, still my love for thee be
strong,
Every joy I wish thee, brother !—Brother ! may thy life be long !”

THE LORD'S SONG.

THE Bhagavad-Gitâ, or Lord's Song,* is an Episode of the Mahâbhârata, and probably an interpolation of a somewhat later date; if so, it has certainly been most skilfully introduced into the main story. It has already been mentioned that the subject of that Poem is a war for regal supremacy between the sons of two brothers, Pându and Dhritarâshtra; the hosts are drawn up upon the plain, and the conch-blasts sounding for the battle. Arjun, one of the rival Princes, is struck with horror at the sight, and shudders at the thought of shedding the blood of his kinsmen; upon this his friend Krishna, who is no less than the incarnate Deity himself, rebukes the recreant warrior for his weakness, and endeavours to remove his compunction by explaining to him the true nature of God and the Soul, and unfolding to his wondering hearer the beautiful Pantheism of the Brâhman Sages, and the divine philosophy of their Religion.

FULL in the centre of the embattled plain,
At Arjun's bidding, Krishna drew the rein,
And stay'd his horses and the glorious car,
To gaze at leisure on the front of war.
"O, mark," said Krishna, "trusting in their might,
Great Kuru's Children eager for the fight;
Mark well the leaders in their bright array,
And thousands, burning or to fall or slay!"
He look'd; as foemen stood on either side,
Kinsmen and friends by dearest ties allied;
There fathers, sons, and holy Teachers stood,
Uncles and brothers, near in love and blood;

* This word is here taken in a peculiar sense to imply the enunciation of abstruse and holy doctrines, as the Latins said "*canere* oracula."

Sad was the sight to Arjun ;—o'er his soul
 Horror, and doubt, and mournful pity stole :—
 "Alas ! dear Krishna," cried the sorrowing Chief,
 "How fails my spirit at this sight of grief !
 Trembling and fear takes hold of every limb,
 Parch'd is my mouth, my sickening sight is dim ;
 Back to my heart the hasting torrents flow,
 My hand, unnerved, lets fall the trusty bow ;
 My brain whirls round ; with aching gaze I see
 Sure, grievous omens of what soon must be ;
 Ah ! we shall gain no blessing if we slay
 Our friends, our kinsmen, in this hideous fray.
 I seek not rule, nor victory in the strife,—
 What shall we gain by empire ? what by life ?
 For, ah ! those stand against us on the plain,
 For whose dear sake alone I'd live or reign.
 No, let them smite—they shall not feel my brand,
 My kinsmen ne'er shall hate my murdering hand ;
 Not the Three Worlds should tempt me to the sin,—
 Yet earthly power is all the conquerors win.
 O mighty Krishna ! Thou whom men adore !
 Grief would be ours, and woe for evermore ;
 Ne'er can our souls escape the fearful guilt,
 When once these hands our kinsmen's blood have spilt—
 Stain'd with their slaughter, felons though they be,
 From fierce remorse we never should be free.
 Though lust of power has led astray their mind,
 And made their leaders to this horror blind,
 Let us who boast a juster, clearer sight,
 Abhor the sin, and shun the impious fight.
 Sad is the fate when families decay,
 Those duties perish God ordain'd for aye ;
 Unfelt, unheeded, holy Virtue fails,
 O'er the whole Caste impiety prevails,
 Faults follow faults—more grievous woes begin,
 For noble matrons foully stoop to sin ;
 Thence in disorder Castes are darkly mix'd,

Spurn'd are the bounds that God himself has fix'd ;
Such lawless sinners here in woe shall dwell,
And drag their Fathers with them down to Hell.

Woe for our sins ! and shall we dare to slay
Our friends, our kinsmen, through the lust of sway ?
No, let them come—charge in their fierce career,
And slay me armless, unresisting here ;
For thus to die for me is better far
Than live to slay my kindred in the war."

He spake ; and, as his fingers dropp'd the bow,
Fell fainting in an agony of woe.

"Oh, hence"—said Krishna, as the Hero lay,
His troubled senses well-nigh fled away—
"Whence hath this cloud of error, dark as night,
Come o'er thy soul, and quench'd thy spirit's light ?
Nay, cast it from thee, 'tis the Hero's shame,
His bar to Heaven, the ruin of his fame ;
Scourge of thy Foemen ! spurn the fear that lies
On thy sad spirit, and awake ! arise !"
"How can I lift," said he, "my slaughtering hand,
To stain in Teachers' holy blood my brand ?
No, let me beg my bread from day to day,
But not my friends, my more than fathers, slay.
Horror and doubt distract my soul within—
Doubt of my duty, horror of the sin ;
O tell me, Krishna ! for to thee I fly,
Thine own Disciple, mighty Friend ! am I—
Tell me my duty, for no way I see
To ease my anguish, save advice from Thee ;
For should I gain on earth undoubted sway—
E'en should the Powers of Heaven my rule obey—
Yet bitter anguish still would banish rest,
Thou, only Thou, canst calm my troubled breast."

THE DEITY.

"Yea, there is wisdom in thy words, O Chief !
But thou hast wept for those who claim no grief ;

Mourn not for them, O Arjun ! for the Wise
Grieve for none living, weep for none that dies ;
Nor thou, nor yonder Princes ere were not,
For ever have they been, though changed their lot ;
So shall their being through all time extend,
Without beginning, and without an end.
The vital Spirit in this mortal clay
Lives on through Youth, from Childhood, to Decay ;
And then new forms the fleeting souls receive—
Why for these changes should the Hero grieve ?

Know that What Is can never cease to Be,
What Is Not can Be never—they who see
The mystic Truth, the Wise, alone can tell
The nature of the things they study well.
And be thou sure the mighty boundless Soul,
The Eternal Essence, that pervades this Whole,
Can never perish—never waste away,
The Indestructible knows not decay.
Frail though its shrine, undimm'd It lasts for ever,
The bodies perish—That can perish never ;
Up then ! and conquer ! in thy might arise !
Fear not to slay It, for It never dies.

For whoso thinks the Spirit e'er is slain,
Or that It slays, the thoughts alike are vain ;
Ancient of Days, It has no birth, no death,
And comes not, flees not with the passing breath,
But birthless, changeless, endless is for aye,
And dies not when the body dies away.
As men throw off their garments worn and old,
And newer raiment round their bodies fold,
The etherial spirit leaves its mortal shell,
And finds another form wherein to dwell.
Essence of Life—It lives, undimm'd its ray,
Though fiercest fire, or keen dark seek to slay ;
To quench that Light too weak the raging main,
And mighty tempests spend their wrath in vain.
Viewless, immutable, unshaken, still,

It rests secure, yet wanders where It will ;
 Incomprehensible, It knows not change,
 Boundless in being, limitless in range.
 This is the Nature of the Soul, great Chief !
 It lives for ever, therefore spare thy grief ;
 Yet even if thou think It often born,
 Often to die,—e'en then thou shouldst not mourn ;
 'Tis fated thus, and all lament is vain,
 All that is born must die—that dies, be born again.

* * * *

Moreover, Prince, thine Order's Duty know—
 To fight unmoved, nor tremble at the foe ;
 Oh ! what should give the Warrior more delight
 Than to do bravely, battling for the right !
 Happy, oh ! happy those whom Fate has given
 The soldier's death—the open door to Heaven !
 Fight, Arjun ! fight ! or ruin thy fair fame,
 Desert thy duty, gain a coward's name ;
 Men ne'er shall cease to tell of thy disgrace—
 A hero's stain no time can e'er efface.
 The noble Chiefs who drive the lofty car,
 Will spurn thee as a runaway from war ;
 Thy foes will heap foul scorn upon thy head,
 Thy friends will sorrow for thine honour fled.
 Up ! and do bravely, Prince of royal line ;
 Dying—high Heaven and all its joys are thine,
 Conquering—wide sway on earth awaiteth thee ;
 Up ! and do bravely ! make thy foemen flee !"

* * * *

"How few, O Arjun ! with their heart and might
 Seek after Wisdom, to know God aright ?
 But fewer still that noblest wish attain,
 And perfect knowledge of the Godhead gain.
 These eight, O Prince ! My mighty Essence share,—
 The Earth, the Water, Fire, Æther, Air,

Mind, Understanding, and Self-consciousness,*—
 Of My two natures thou hast heard the Less.
 But now again prepare thy listening ear,
 My higher nature, nobler still, to hear ;
 Life of all Life, Prop of this earthly frame,
 Whither all creatures go, from whence they came.
 I am the Best ; from Me all beings spring,
 And rest on me, like pearls upon their string ;
 I am the Moisture in the moving stream,
 In Sun and Moon the bright essential Beam ;
 The Mystic Word † in Scripture's holy page,
 In men the Vigour of their manly age ;
 Sound in the Air—Earth's fragrant Scent am I—
 Life of all living—Good men's Piety—
 Seed of all Being—Brightness in the Flame ;
 In the Wise, Wisdom ; in the Famous Fame."

* * * *

"I am the Father, and the fostering Nurse,
 Grandsire, and Mother of the Universe ;
 I am the Vedas, and the Mystic Word.
 The Way, Support, the Witness, and the Lord ;
 The Seed am I, of deathless quickening power,
 The Home of all, and might Refuge-tower ;
 I warm the World, I give the freshëning rain,
 Now send the showers, and now the showers restrain ;
 Whatever Is, and what is Not, am, I ;
 Death, and the Drink of Immortality.
 They who with pious care have studied o'er,
 And made their own the triple Vedas' lore,
 Whose Fires have duly glow'd, whose lips have quaff'd
 The holy Soma's purifying draught, ‡

* The sense of Self ; the *Cogito, ergo Sum—Moi, je suis—Ich bin ich*, of European Philosophers.

† "The sacred syllable om," THE mystic name of the Deity, prefacing all the prayers, and most of the writings of the Hindûs, it implies Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Siva, the *Indian triad*, and expresses the *three in one*."

‡ The juice of the Soma, or *Moon-plant*, much used in sacrifices, &c.

Pray unto Me, nor are their prayers in vain,
 For due reward and heavenly bliss they gain ;
 They hie to Indra's holy sphere, and share
 The joy of Gods, and all the glories there ;
 But time at length exhausts their store of worth,
 And brings them down, unparadised, to earth ; *
 Thus Holy Writ they make their only stay,
 And gain their longing—bliss, but for a day.
 But those a nobler, higher blessing find,
 Who worship me with all their heart and mind ;
 Me, only Me their rapt devotion knows,
 With Me alone their transcended spirit glows.

When error leads a worshipper astray
 To other Gods to sacrifice and pray,
 Faith makes his gift accepted in my sight—
 'Tis offer'd still to Me, though not aright.
 Faith makes the humblest offering dear to Me,
 Leaves, fruit, sweet water, flowers from the tree ;
 His pious will in gracious part I take,
 And love the gift for his devotion's sake.

Do all thine acts to Me through all thy days ;
 Thy food, thy gifts, thy sacrifice, thy praise ;
 Then will the bonds of actions done by thee,
 Worthy or evil, leave thy spirit free ;
 And thy pure soul, renouncing earthly care,
 Will come, unshackled, and My Essence share ;
 Though equal looks on all things I bestow, †
 Nor enmity, nor partial fondness know,
 Yet happy they who love Me faithfully,
 I dwell within them ever—they in Me."

* "Besides this ultimate felicity, (absorption into the divine Essence,) the Hindüs have several minor degrees of happiness ; amongst which is the enjoyment of Indra's Swarga, or in fact of a Muhammadan paradise. The degree and duration of the pleasures of this paradise are proportional to the merits of those admitted to it ; and 'they who have enjoyed this lofty region of Swarga, but whose virtue is exhausted, revisit the habitation of mortals.'—WILSON.

† "Who sees with equal eye ; as God of all,
 A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."—*Essay on Man*.

Sakontala, a Drama.

UPON the Story of Sakontalā as related in the Mahābhārata, Kālidāsa has founded a beautiful drama, which has gained European celebrity by the prose translation of Sir William Jones—"the delightful Sakontalā," (to quote the words of A. W. Von Schlegel in his Dramatic Literature,) "which, notwithstanding the foreign colouring of its native climate, bears in its general structure such a striking resemblance to our own romantic drama, that we might be inclined to suspect we owe this resemblance to the predilection for Shakspeare entertained by the English translator, if his fidelity were not attested by other learned Orientalists." It is interesting to compare the following extract from the third Act,* with the Garden Scene in Romeo and Juliet.

SCENE—*The Hermitage in a Grove.*

KING DUSHYANTA *enters, expressing the distraction of a lover.*

KING,

AH me ! I know the maiden's duteous thoughts
Are all obedient to the Sage's will,
All given to him. I cannot, if I would,
I cannot tear my heart away. O Love !
God of the flowery arrows ! foolish those
Who call'd thee thus ; they never felt thy wounds !
And senseless they who say the fair Moon's cold.
Alas ! we lovers feel too well thy darts
Are diamond-pointed, and the treacherous Moon
Sheds fire upon us from those dewy beams.

* Our version is made from the text of Dr. Otto Boehtlingk, Bonn, 1846.
The Bengal MS. followed by Sir William Jones, appears to contain numerous interpolations.

My heart is sick with love. Oh ! for a sight
Of my belovéd ! I will seek my darling,
For in her bower upon the river bank,
She flies the fierce heat of these noontide hours.
How lovely is this spot ! here shall the breeze,
Its soft wings freshen'd by the shady stream,
Cool with its perfumed kiss my burning temples !
She must be near—perhaps in that thick bower
My love reposes—yes, I see her footsteps
That scarcely mark the sand, I feel her presence !
Oh ! there's the lady of my love, and with her
Her two dear friends. I'll hide behind these creepers,
And with mine ear drink in their artless prattle.
[He stands concealed, and gazes.]

SAKONTALA, and her two damsels, PRIYAMVADA and ANUSUYA,
discovered.

BOTH *(fanning her)*.

Does this refresh you, dear Sakontalâ ?
Do you feel easier when we fan you, love !
With these broad Lotus leaves ?

SAKONTALÂ.

Why will you fan me ?

Now rest dear girls, I pray.

KING *(aside)*.

Ah ! she looks flush'd,
What means her sudden fever ? Does the wish
Of my fond heart suggest the truth ? Cool herbs
Lie on her heaving bosom—her one bracelet,
A water-lily stalk tied loosely on—
Still lovely—O most lovely is the maid !

PRIYAMVADÂ *(aside to Anusûyâ)*.

Dear Anusûyâ, did you not observe,
How, at the first sight of the youthful monarch,

Sakontalâ's fond heart was stolen from her ?
This brings her fever, I suspect.

ANUSUYÂ (*aside to Priyamvadâ*).

I'll ask her.

(*Aloud.*) This burning fever, dear Sakontalâ—

SAKONTALÂ.

What would you say ?

ANUSUYÂ.

Why, you appear to us

Like some enamour'd maid that we have heard of
In tales of love—do let us know the cause ;
How can we minister to one diseased
Before we know the malady ?

SAKONTALÂ.

My pain

Is hard to bear ; but yet, indeed—indeed
I cannot, dare not tell my friends the cause.

PRIYAMVADÂ.

Yet listen to her, for she counsels well ;
Day after day beneath this scorching fever
You grow more thin, more pale, although your beauty
Has not yet left you, dearest !

KING (*aside*).

True, most true !

Wan is her cheek—her shape has lost its fulness,
Her shoulders droop for languor—those large eyes
Shine with less brightness. Oh ! how like is she
To some fair creeper when the sultry gale
Has dried up its young leaves—yet lovely still,
Most lovely is she, as my heart can tell.

SAKONTALÂ.

What can I say ? Why make *you* sorrow also ?

BOTH.

Oh ! share your grief with us—the sympathy
Of faithful friends will make your sorrows lighter.

SAKONTALÂ.

From the first moment that I saw the Prince
I have loved him—oh ! so deeply !

KING (*aside*).

Joy for ever !

Sweet words of healing ! Love, that burnt my soul,
Now brings me peace again ; as when the noon
Has cool'd with gathering clouds the morning heat.

SAKONTALÂ.

Do help me, dearest girls !

PRIYAMVADÂ.

I have *such* a plan !

Come, Anusûyâ, we will write a letter
And hide it in a flower, which as an offering
Of humble duty, I myself will give
Into the Prince's hand.

ANUSÛYÂ.

That's excellent !

That's charming !, what says dear Sakontalâ ?

SAKONTALÂ.

Stay, let me think—

PRIYAMVADÂ.

And think too of a verse

Fitly to tell your love.

SAKONTALÂ.

Yes, presently,

But my heart beats for fear of a cold answer.

KING (*aside*).

From one that burns for thee, thou timid maiden ?

PRIYAMVADÂ AND ANUSÛYÂ.

Oh no ! you think too lowly of yourself ;
Who in his senses would not welcome gladly
The pure cool moonlight of an autumn heaven ?

SAKONTALÂ.

Well, now I am thinking.

KING (*aside*).

Thus then will I fix

My fond eyes on my darling : her dear brow

Is arch'd in meditation, and her cheek

Rests on her hand—all speaks her love for me.

SAKONTALÂ.

The verse I have, but nothing here to write with.

PRIYAMVADÂ.

Oh, mark it with your nail upon the leaf

Of this broad Lotus—'tis as green and soft

As a young parrot's breast. Do let us hear it !

SAKONTALÂ.

"I read not *thy* heart, but my bosom can tell

Thou hast ravish'd my thoughts and my senses away,

And oh ! I am warn'd that I love thee too well,

By the flames that consume me by night and by day."

KING (*hastily advancing*).

"Thou knowest, dear maid ! but Love's tenderest power,

But in me does he rage with his terrible might ;

Day stifles the scent of the night-loving flower ;

But kills the pale Moon with his conquering light."

ANUSÛYÂ.

Welcome, great King ! my friend's imagination

Has fruited soon.

[*Sakontalâ expresses an inclination to rise.*]

KING.

Nay, move not, gentle Lady !

Still rest upon that bed of pleasant flowers ;

You seem oppress'd by this hot summer sun.

ANUSÛYÂ.

Then let my lord sit also on the couch

On which our dear Sakontalâ reposes.

PRIYAMVADÂ.

See Anusûyâ ! our poor little fawn
Is looking for its mother.—Let us go
And lead it to her.

SAKONTALÂ.

Oh ! come back, dear girls !
You should not leave me here alone.

PRIYAMVADÂ AND ANUSÛYÂ.

Alone !
When the Defender of the World is near you !
[Exeunt Priyamvadâ and Anusûyâ.]

In the next Act, some time after their marriage, Sakontalâ leaves her foster-father Kanva's Hermitage for the palace of her husband Dushyanta.

KANVA.

Nymphs of the trees that shade this holy dell,
Now bid your dear Sakontalâ farewell !
This day she goes, adoring and adored,
To deck the palace of her wedded lord ;
Farewell to her that loved your clustering bowers,
And gently tended all your opening flowers ;
Who in her love would ever wait to see
The cool stream pour'd around each favourite tree,
Nor drink before her darlings ; she would ne'er
Pluck your green tendrils for her waving hair—
Her proudest joy to see her nurslings blow
In the full beauty of their summer glow.

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE WOOD-NYMPHS.

Love smooth the path our fair Lady shall tread,
Sweet flowers 'neath her feet, and dark boughs overhead !
The breeze shall pour round her the heavenly perfume
That it steals from the woods where the Lotuses bloom,
And fan her bright tresses, deliciously cool,
With the sweet pearly dew of the lily-clad pool !

SAKONTALÂ.

This happy day, Priyamvadâ ! will see
 Once more united my dear lord and me ;
 Yet my heart sinks at leaving these sweet bowers,
 The sacred haunts of childhood's blissful hours.

PRIYAMVADÂ.

They share thy sorrow, dearest ! look around,
 How the trees weep their pale leaves to the ground
 In lamentation for thee ; the sad roe
 Forbears to crop the pleasant grass for woe,
 And mourning peahens are no longer seen
 To dance in joyous circles on the green.

SAKONTALÂ.

My darling creeper, take my last embrace,
 And twine thy fond arms o'er my weeping face ;
 Still though I leave my father's home and thee,
 Dear to my memory, sweet one, shalt thou be ;
 And now, my friends, this last memorial take,
 And tend my creeper for its mistress' sake.

PRIYAMVADÂ.

Sakontalâ ! who now will care for us ?

KANVA.

Your tears are idle, Lady ! weep not thus ;
 Nay, you should act a wiser, better part,
 And strive to cheer Sakontalâ's sad heart.

SAKONTALÂ.

Father ! when she has young—my dear gazelle
 Send a kind message that my pet is well.
 What is it clings so closely to my dress ?

KANVA.

Your darling little fawn—your tenderness
 Would oft with healing oil its mouth anoint

When prick'd too roughly by the sharp grass point—
A mother's love your gentle care supplied,
And now your nursling will not quit your side.

SAKONTALÂ.

Go back, my darling ! here thou still mayst roam,
But I must leave our well-belovéd home ;
As I supplied a mother's place to thee,
Thou to my father shalt a daughter be ;*
Go back, poor thing ! go back.

* 2 Sam. xii. 2.—“ One little ewe lamb, which * * * lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.”

Summer.

THE following piece is taken from a little descriptive poem called Ritu-sanhâra, or the Seasons; we know nothing of its literary history, but general tradition seems to have assigned it to Kâlidâsa, and it would be difficult to disprove the assertion from the internal evidence offered by the poem. Sir William Jones has spoken in rapturous terms of the beautiful and natural sketches with which it abounds—many portions of it will certainly command admiration, and it is much to be regretted that it is impossible to translate the whole.

SUMMER-time is come, my love !
And the fair Moon from above
Pours down brighter purer beams
On the sweetly flowing streams,
Where merry bathers chase away
The heat and languor of the day.

Summer-houses balmy cool
Freshen'd by the wavy pool,
And the Sandal's precious scent,
Fill the soul with ravishment ;
Evenings now are pleasantest,
Girls are kind, and lovers blest.

Cool is now the chamber-floor,
With new perfumes scatter'd o'er ;
And 'tis sweet the wine to sip
Trembling from the charmer's lip,
Whilst waking love, melodious song
Wings the midnight hours along.

Robed in muslin, loveliest girls,
Their full bosoms deck'd with pearls,
Streaming odours from their hair,
Yield them to their lovers' prayer.

Mark ! their feet with vermeil glow !
Hark ! they tinkle as they go !
And their anklets' melody
Chimeth out harmoniously,
Ravishing their lovers' mind,
Like swan-music on the wind.

Oh ! how beautiful are they !
Often does the Moon's bright ray,
Gazing on the perfect grace
Of each sweetly slumbering face,
When the break of day is nigh,
Wax all pale for jealousy.

Now the burning Summer Sun
Hath unchallenged empire won,
And the scorching winds blow free,
Blighting every herb and tree.
Should the longing exile try,
Watching with a lover's eye,
Well remember'd scenes to trace—
Vainly would he scan the place,
For the dust with shrouding veil
Wraps it in a mantle pale.

Lo ! the Lion—forest King—
Through the wood is wandering ;
By the maddening thirst opprest,
Ceaseless heaves his panting chest ;
Though the Elephant pass by,
Scarcely turns his languid eye—
Bleeding mouth and failing limb,
What is now his prey to him ?

And the Elephants no more
Dread the angry Lion's roar ;
Ever wandering to and fro,

Crushing through the woods they go,
Vainly seeking as they pass
For some dew-drop in the grass.

Winding slow his sinuous track
On the pathway hard and black,
Scorch'd and faint the serpent crawls
Where the Peacocks' shadow falls,
If perchance his scathed crest
In that welcome shade may rest.

Lo ! their ancient enemy !
Helpless there they see him die ;
Fierce as sacrificial pile
Glow's the Sun's red heat the while,
And the gorgeous Peacock's eye
Closes in his agony.

Driven from their parched home,
Frogs in countless armies come,
And, their fears by heat allay'd,
Couch them in the Serpent's shade.

Heeding not the trembling throng,
Darting out his flickering tongue,
Lifteth he his head on high
If some breeze may wander by,
For the Sun's refulgent beam
Slays him with his scorching gleam.

Where the sparkling lake before
Fill'd its bed from shore to shore,
Roots and twisting fibres wind,
Dying fish in nets to bind ;
There the Cranes in anguish seek
Water with the thirsty beak,
Fainting 'neath the burning ray
That drinks their very lives away.

Elephants all mad with thirst,
From the woods in fury burst ;
From their mountain-caverns, see !
Buffaloes rush furiously—

With hanging tongue and foam-fleck'd hide
Tossing high their nostrils wide,
Eager still their sides to cool
In the thick and shrunken pool ;
Heedless, if they may but gain
Short relief, but all in vain !

The wood is on fire ! and flashing on high,
The red flames leap, swiftly from earth to sky.
'Tis a sight of fear—how they burn up the grass,
And scorch in their fury the leaves as they pass !
In their triumphing progress they meet no stream,
For the fountains are dried by the fierce sun-beam.

Birds pant on the boughs where no verdure waves,
And the Monkeys have fled to the mountain-caves.
Hark ! 'tis the rush of the Buffaloes' feet,
As they thunder away from the fervent heat,
Madden'd they wander here and there,
Seeking for water everywhere.

Far and near through the meadows around
The conquering flames have scorch'd the ground ;
Redder the blaze of the burning by far
Than brightest Vermilion or Safflowers are ;
The victor rides on with the wings of the wind,
And leaves a desolate waste behind ;
The trees and the creepers around, below,
Sink in the clip of their furious foe.

How the caves of the mountain re-echo his roar !
How crackle the reeds as he passes o'er !
He flies through the grass with a voice of fear,
And drives from the forest the terrified deer.
Madden'd by fright, and by thirst, and by heat.
As friends forgetting their enmity, meet
United by woes, the wild-wood foes,
Elephants, Lions, and Buffaloes,
And away to the river—away they fly,
Where sheltering islands, for refuge, lie.

Pleasantly, love ! may thy Summer-time flee !
For thee shall the Lotus perfume the cool stream ;
All flowers that are fairest shall blossom for thee,
And the moon through thy lattice most brightly shall gleam :
While singing and music shall lull thee to rest,
And those shall be near thee thou lovest the best.

The Malodaya.

THE Nalodaya, or History of King Nala, is a poem of a later date, founded upon the story of that Monarch contained in the Mahâbhârata, to which allusion has been made in these pages, and a brief extract from it offered to the reader. This poem also has been ascribed to Kâlidâsa, but it is at least difficult to believe that the author of Sakontalâ and the Cloud Messenger should have composed such a work—a laborious jingling of words—a series of puns upon a pathetic subject! It is remarkable, however, for showing the extraordinary powers of the Sanskrit language, and it is impossible not to wonder at the ingenuity of the workman, however misdirected we may think it.

The following extract gives an account of Damayanti's choosing herself a husband from the assembled suitors; and it has been selected rather with the view of introducing the general reader to that extraordinary ceremony, than with the hope of giving an adequate idea of the execution of the poem.

DAMAYANTI'S CHOICE.

WITH all pomp and preparation far and wide through all the nation
Sent the mighty Lord of Earth,
Duly proclamation made he,—Damayanti, noble Lady,
Fair of form, of royal birth,
Holds her Choice, and gives her hand
To the best of all the land.

Then with chariots and horses, and the leaders of their forces,
Princes flock'd from every side—
For her charms their breasts were firing, fondly, eagerly, aspiring
To the winning of the Bride;
Bright with many a precious gem
Shone each suitor's diadem,

To her father's lordly towers came the mighty Heavenly powers,
Guardians of the well-loved place,
Came to see the maiden's beauty—for the tidings of her Duty,
And her loveliness of face,
And the magic of her eyes,
Drew them from the blissful skies.

Nala too, the great and glorious, noble Hero, brave, victorious,
Came in all his state that day—
Onward came the Chieftain proudly, and the people shouted loudly
At his glorious array—
Hail'd his coming every one,
Like the rising of the sun.

There they shone in all their glory, princes famed in warlike story,
Conquerors of their enemies—
Glowing for their heavenly places shone the bright majestic faces
Of the Blessed Deities—
Nala beam'd beyond compare,
Brighter than the brightest there.

Then the bold no more were fearless, for they all confess'd him
peerless—
He must win the lovely Bride—
Oh ! how can the Lady love us, when he shines so far above us
In his beauty, in his pride !
Indra's self approach'd in fear,
Spake he thus in Nala's ear :—

"Chieftain ! bear our message to her, say that We are come to woo
her
From the bowers of Paradise—
Say, her love our souls subduing hither now has brought Us suing,
Brought us from the blissful skies ;
Go and fear not, for Our might
Shields Our messenger from sight."

He obey'd all sorrow-laden, and he sought the lovely maiden,
Faithful, but disconsolate.

In her bower the Chieftain found her ; with no band of damsels
round her,

All alone the Princess sate.

"I am Nala," thus spake he,

"Herald from the Gods to thee ;

"Lady fair ! the Gods adore thee, They have come from Heaven for
thee,

Lady of the lovely brow !

Pain and sickness ne'er shall grieve thee, happiness shall never
leave thee,

For their chosen Bride art thou ;

Maiden ! worthy of the love

Of the Blessed Ones above !

"Fairer than the Fair of Heaven ! endless joy to thee is given

If thou hearken to my voice ;

Bliss for ever shall delight thee, matchless happiness requite thee

For thy love, thy wreath, thy choice ;

Go, and with undying lip

The Drink of Life, the Amrit sip !"

Thus the noble Chief address'd her—and a mighty love possess'd her

For the Prince who spake to her ;

Vainly for the Gods he pleaded—the high message was unheeded,

For she loved the messenger.

"Tell the Blessed Ones," she cried,

"Never can I be their Bride."

Duly were her words repeated.—Now the rival Kings were seated

In the glorious company ;

High their hearts within them bounded, as the voice of music sounded

Through the place melodiously ;

And the Lady, royal prize,

Shone there with her large soft eyes.

Then the herald's proclamation made the wonted celebration
Of each princely suitor's name ;
Back through many an age they traced them, told the glorious deeds
that graced them,
And the triumphs of their fame ;
Whilst the wondering subject crowd
Low before the Princes bow'd.

Damayanti now advancing, o'er the assembled Chieftains glancing,
Look'd around her anxiously ;
Doubt and wilderment came o'er her, more than *one* shone bright
before her,
In that form she long'd to see—
All with Nala's matchless face.
All with Nala's heavenly grace !

Then she cried, her senses failing, in an undertone of wailing :—
“Hear, ye Gods, to whom I pray !
If so be that Ye have found me bountiful to all around me
Give the recompense to-day !
If in Childhood and in Youth
I have kept the path of Truth.

“If I love my Nala truly—hold his image printed duly
Deep within my faithful breast—
Let the Prince I love so dearly shine out in his beauty clearly
To my eyes above the rest,
Like the noble forest King
O'er the wild beasts towering.”

Thus she pray'd in lamentation—and the Maiden's supplication
Favour with the Blessed found—
And with wondering eyes she noted how their heavenly bodies floated
Unsupported by the ground,
Whilst her Nala, Child of Earth,
Stood confest of mortal birth.

Duly then her Choice was given, and the mighty Lords of Heaven
Pour'd their blessings on the Chief ;
For so well they seem'd united, that the rival Gods, delighted,
Knew no envy, felt no grief—
And they left the loving Pair
Blest as the Immortals there.

Thus did Nala, great and glorious, noble Hero, brave, victorious,
Gain the royal peerless Bride.
To his City drove he proudly, whilst the people cheer'd him loudly,
With his Lady at his side ;
And his subjects glad and gay,
Kept their merry holiday.

The Gita Govinda.

THE beautiful little pastoral drama entitled the Gita Govinda, or the Song of the Divine Herdsman, is a specimen of that mystic or emblematical theology, "that figurative mode of expressing the fervour of devotion, or the ardent love of created spirits towards their beneficent Creator, which has prevailed from time immemorial in Asia."*

Under the figure of the love, quarrels, and reconciliation of the incarnate Diety, dwelling, like the Grecian Apollo, amongst the flocks and herds under the name of Krishna, with the beautiful shepherdess Râdhâ, it shadows forth the reciprocal attachment which exists between the human Soul and Divine Beauty, Goodness and Knowledge. As Krishna, faithless for a time, discovers the vanity of all other loves, and returns with sorrow and longing to his own darling Râdhâ so the human Soul after a brief and frantic attachment to objects of sense, burns to return to the God from whence it came—"from its original instinct, it vergeth toward him as its centre, and can have no rest till it be fixed on him. * * * He doth cherish and encourage our love by sweetest influences and most consoling embraces;" and, "in that mysterious union of spirit, whereby we do closely adhere to, and are, as it were, inserted in him, * * * we cannot but feel very pleasant transports."†

With respect to the date of the composition nothing certain is known, but it seems now to be generally believed that the author, Jayadeva, flourished at least as late as the twelfth century of our Era.

A few stanzas from some of the principal songs are here offered by way of specimen, but the exquisite melody of the verse can only be appreciated by those who can enjoy the original.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

KRISHNA.

NANDA—A Herdsman, foster-father of KRISHNA.

RÂDHÂ.

DAMSEL, Attendant on RÂDHÂ.

SHEPHERDESSES, beloved by KRISHNA.

* Sir W. Jones, "On the Mystical Poetry of the Hindus."

† These passages are extracted from a portion of one of Barrow's Sermons quoted by Sir W. Jones in his Essay on the Mystical Poetry of the Hindus.

NANDA.

"Go, gentle Râdhâ, seek thy fearful love ;
Dusk are the woodlands—black the sky above ;
Bring thy dear wanderer home, and bid him rest
His weary head upon thy faithful breast."

Through tangled bushes, 'neath the forest shade,
In anxious search the love-lorn Râdhâ stray'd ;
"Cease !" cried a pitying maiden, "cease thy care,
Nor seek him further, for thy love is there !"

She Sings.

In this love-tide of Spring when the amorous breeze
Has kiss'd itself sweet on the beautiful trees,
And the humming of numberless bees, as they throng
To the blossoming shrubs, swells the Kokila's song—
In this love-tide of Spring when the spirit is glad,
And the parted—yes, only the parted—are sad,
Thy lover, thy Krishna, is dancing in glee
With troops of young maidens, forgetful of thee.

The season is come when the desolate bride
Would woo with laments her dear lord to her side,
When the rich-laden stems of the Vakul bend low
'Neath the clustering flowers in the pride of their glow ;
In this love-tide of Spring when the spirit is glad,
And the parted—yes, only the parted—are sad,
Thy lover, thy Krishna, is dancing in glee
With troops of young maidens, forgetful of thee.

Dispensing rich odours the sweet Mâdhavi
With its lover-like wreathings encircles the tree ;
And oh ! e'en a Hermit must yield to the power,
The ravishing scent of the Mallika flower.
In this love-tide of Spring when the spirit is glad,
And the parted—and none but the parted—are sad,
Thine own, thy dear Krishna is dancing in glee,
He loves his fair partners, and thinks not of thee.

The damsel pointed where she saw him stand,
All wild with love, and drunk with wanton bliss,
Wooring, caressing each young dancer's hand.
With many a glance, with many an eager kiss.

She Sings.

Saffron robes his body grace,
Flowery wreaths his limbs entwine,
There's a smile upon his face,
And his ears with jewels shine ;
In that youthful company,
Amorous felon ! revels he
False to all, most false to thee.

See ! one bolder than the rest
Woos him nearer and more near,
Strains him to her heaving breast,
Sings sweet music in his ear.
In that youthful company,
Amorous felon ! revels he,
False to all, most false to thee.

One would fain a secret speak,
Moves aside his wavy hair, . .
Breathes upon his glowing cheek,
Prints a kiss of rapture there.
In that youthful company,
Loving felon ! revels he,
False to all, most false to thee.

Joying, toying, fondly pressing,
Blessing blest—carest caressing ;
Now he's wooing, now embraces—
Now he's suing, now he chases.
In that youthful company,
Amorous felon ! revels he,
False to all, most false to thee.

Yet Râdhâ's image lingering in his breast,
 Forbade his wandering fancy more to rove ;
 He sought his faithful love, by woe opprest.
 And mourn'd his darling in the shady grove.

He Sings.

She is fled, she is gone ! Oh ! how angry was she
 When she saw the gay Shepherd girls dancing with me !
 Oh ! how could I speak to her ! how could I dare
 Intreat her to stay and to pardon me *there* ?

Oh Hari !* vile Hari ! lament thee and mourn,
 Thy Lady has left thee, has left thee in scorn !

What will my darling do, what will she say ?
 How spend the long hours when her lover's away ?
 No riches, no splendour can bring me relief,
 My home is a horror, my life but a grief.

Oh Hari ! vile Hari ! lament thee, and mourn,
 Thy dearest has left thee, has left thee in scorn !

How bright in her anger she seems to me now,
 With her scorn-flashing glance, and her passion-arch'd brow,
 And her proud trembling eye in my fancy I see,
 Like the Lotus that throbs^eneath the wing of the bee.

Oh Hari ! vile Hari ! lament thee and mourn,
 Thy fair one has left thee, has left thee in scorn !

Forgive me, sweet mistress ! oh ! pity my pain,
 And never, believe me, I quit thee again !
 Beam sweet on thy lover the light of thy face,
 And fold me again in thy twining embrace !

Oh Hari ! vile Hari ! lament thee and mourn,
 Thy Râdhâ has left thee, has left thee in scorn !

* * * * *

* A name of Krishna.

KRISHNA *Sings.*

Oh ! grant my prayer, and speak, love,
 I pine thy voice to hear ;
 Even in wrath thy cheek, love,
 Will shine away my fear.
 For the flash of thy teeth is so white, love,
 As bright as the Moon's clear ray ;
 As that dispels the night, love,
 'Twill drive my dread away.

No longer, dearest, spurn me,
 Nor let this passion burn me,
 But let thy thirsting lover sip
 The honied nectar of thy lip.

What ! art thou angry still, love ?
 Then bid thy lover die ;
 Those darts have power to kill, love,—
 Come, slay me with thine eye.
 Or wilt thou have me bound, love ?
 Then throw thine arms around me,
 And there shall I still be found, love,
 In the coils wherein they have wound me.
 Or wilt thou have me slain, love ?
 Then bite me, dear, to death,
 And life will come again, love,
 In the odour of thy breath.

Then oh ! no longer spurn me,
 Nor let this passion burn me,
 But let thy thirsting lover sip
 The honied nectar of thy lip.

* * * * *

DAMSEL *Sings.*

Oh ! his words were soft, Lady ! oh ! his voice was sweet ;
 Many a promise made he, sighing at thy feet ;

With every sweetest flower that glows in beauty there,
He has deck'd his pleasant bower for thee, O Lady fair !

Hasten, oh ! no longer stay !

Hasten to thy love away !

In love their voices raising, sweet birds around thee sing,

And Kokilas are praising the flower-darting King* ;

The spell of Hari's suing no maiden can disown,

Oh ! let not his fond wooing be spurn'd by thee alone !

Lady ! here no longer stay,

Hasten to thy love away !

All calls thee to his dwelling, the reeds are bending low

With pointed fingers † telling the way that thou shouldst go :

Go, thou that lovest dearly—go forth with all thy charms,

Thy zone-bells tinkling clearly are calling thee to arms !

Lady ! here no longer stay,

Haste thee to thy love away !

* Kāma, the God of Love, whose arrows are tipped with flowers.

† “ And all the broad leaves over me

Clapp'd their little *hands* in glee.”—LONGFELLOW.

The Messenger Cloud.

"The subject of the poem is simple and ingenious: a Yaksha, a divinity of an inferior order, an attendant upon the god of riches, Kuvera, and one of a class which, as it appears from the poem, is characterized by a benevolent spirit, a gentle temper, and an affectionate disposition, has incurred the displeasure of his sovereign, and has been condemned by him to a twelve-month's exile from his home. In the solitary but sacred forest in which he spends the period of his banishment, the Yaksha's most urgent care is to find an opportunity of conveying intelligence and consolation to his wife; and, in the wildness of his grief, he fancies that he discovers a friendly messenger in a cloud—one of those noble masses which seem almost instinct with life, as they traverse a tropical sky in the commencement of the Monsoon, and move with slow and solemn progression from the equatorial ocean to the snows of the Himalaya. In the spirit of this bold but not unnatural personification, the Yaksha addresses the Cloud, and entrusts to it the message he yearns to despatch to the absent object of his attachment. He describes the direction in which the Cloud is to travel—one marked out for it indeed, by the eternal laws of nature; and takes this opportunity of alluding to the most important scenes of Hindu mythology and tradition;—not with the dulness of prosaic detail, but with that true poetic pencil which, by a few happy touches brings the subject of the description vividly before the mind's eye. Arrived at the end of the journey, the condition of his beloved wife is the theme of the exile's anticipations, and is dwelt upon with equal delicacy and truth; and the poem terminates with the message that is intended to assuage her grief and animate her hopes. The whole of this part of the composition is distinguished by the graceful expression of natural and amiable feelings, and cannot fail to leave a favourable impression of the national character."—H. H. WILSON.

I.

Dark are the shadows of the trees that wave
Their pendent branches upon Rama's Hill,

Veiling the stream where Sita loved to lave
Sweet limbs that hallowed as they touched the rill :
There a sad spirit, whom his master's will,
Wroth for a service he had rendered ill,
An exile from his happy home had torn,
Was sternly doomed for twelve long months to mourn
Of all his glories reft, of his dear love forlorn.

II.

Some weary days, intolerably slow,
The listless exile all alone had past :
The bracelet clung not to the arm that woe
Had withered, and the weeping and the fast ;
When on a day of June he upward cast
His aching eyes, lo ! on the mountain lay
A glorious cloud embracing it, as vast
As some huge elephant that stoops in play
To trample down the bank that bars his onward way.

III.

Once and again his wistful eyes he raised,
Checking the tear-drop in her secret springs,
And on the jasmine's sweet restorer gazed
The mournful servant of the King of Kings*—
Mournful, for if the first seen rain-cloud brings
Trouble and doubt to him whose arms prest
Around his love, O, judge what torture wrings
His bosom far from her he loves the best,
A prey to longing love and fear and wild unrest.

IV.

Then cheered by hope he culled each budding spray,
And the last blooms that lingered in the brake
And hastened humbly to the Cloud to pray
With offerings, trusting for his darling's sake,

* A title of Kuvera, the God of Wealth.

While, Welcome, friendship's sweetest word he spake,
That he would waft his message, as a spell
Whence life and comfort the lone bride might take :
That he would calm her troubled heart and tell
That were she only present all with him were well.

V.

Blame not the Spirit, if his wild despair
Urged his love-laden bosom to complain
To the dark Child of vapour, sun, and air ;
Have ye ne'er learnt that hopeless love is fain
To shriek the lamentation, wrung by pain,
In nature's senseless ear ; to weep and moan
To valley and to mountain, and to rain
Tears on the flowers and call on stock and stone
To suffer with his woe and echo groan for groan ?

VI.

"O thou of ever-changing form," he cried,
"I know thee, offspring of a glorious race,
The mighty counsellor : close by the side
Of royal Indra is thine honoured place.
By cruel fate torn from my love's embrace
I fly to thee for comfort in my woe :
Better to sue and be denied the grace
By one of gentle blood whose worth we know,
Than stoop to bear away rich guerdon from the low.

VII.

Dear friend of all whom flames of anguish burn,
If thou hast power and pity, as of old,
On me, on me, thy tender glances turn,
Who mourn the anger of the God of Gold ;
To distant Alaka fly uncontrolled,
Where dwell my brethren in their stately halls,

There let my message to my love be told
'Mid gilded palaces and marble walls
On which the silver light of Siva's crescent* falls.

VIII.

There wilt thou see the melancholy bride
Of me, thy brother, thin and ghastly pale;
Her only care—for every joy has died—
To count the dark days' slowly lengthening tale.
She lingers yet; for woman's heart, though frail
As the fair flower that, nipt by winter's chill,
Bends her sweet head before the rude rough gale,
If hope be left her in her misery, still
Clings fondly to the life despair alone can kill.

IX.

Hence as thou mountest up, each lonely wife,
Tossing her tresses from her brow in glee
And drinking from the sight rapture and life,
Thy rapid course through realms of air shall see,
And whisper blessings as she looks on thee.
For who at such a warning would not brave
Danger and death, and to his darling flee,
Save the sad captive in his fetters, save
A prisoned wretch like me, a tyrant's helpless slave!

X.

As favouring gales thy airy course impel,
The tuneful Rain-birds shall thy way attend;
A pomp of wreathing cranes thy state shall swell,
On silver pinions rustling round their friend;
From many a stream shall lordly swans ascend,
When the glad thunder of thy voice they hear,

* The crest of Siva is the new moon, and the Himalaya mountains, amid which Alaka is situated, are his favourite haunts.

And wild with joy their eager course shall bend
To Manas' mountain lake, still following near
Till high Kailasa's peaks, thy journey's end, apper.

XI.

Now with one brief adieu, one last embrace,
Turn from this steep, thine ancient friend, away,
Where Rama's blessed feet once left their trace,
Though his hot tears will mourn thy shortened stay :
Yet, ere the message of my love I say,
Hear the long journey, mark each place of rest
Where thou wilt fain with weary wings delay
To gather strength upon some mountain crest,
Or drink exhausted from some gentle river's breast.

XII.

Quick from this mountain, moist with verdure, rise,
And turn thee northward : in thy lofty flight
The nymphs of air with eager upturned eyes
Shall look on thee in wonder and delight,
And deem some hill rent from the mountain height
Rides on the furious blast. Then, sad with shame,
The warder elephants, whose peerless might
Upholds the skies, shall mourn their vanisht fame,
And, far surpast by thee, renounce their ancient claim.

XIII.

Then steering east, yon glorious gems that blend
Their light and shade in Indra's heavenly bow*
To thy dark ground a softened light shall lend,
And make thee glorious with a borrowed glow ;
As the gay splendours of the peacock throw
New beauty, round the youthful Krishna spread,

* The rainbow.

Then to the plains of fruitful Mala go
Whose bright-eyed maids, with fond looks upward sped,
Shall bless their bounteous friend slow sailing overhead.

XIV.

Thence northward speeding, with a lighter course,
Turn to the west, and, floating downward, seek,
A pleasant shelter to recruit thy force,
The shady summits of the Mango Peak.
He will relieve thee travel-worn and weak;
Thy timely aid that oft has quencht the flame
That burnt his trees will in thy favour speak.
Friendship's sweet debt not e'en the base disclaim,
And far from noble souls be such disgrace and shame.*

XV.

When thy dark glory rests above the gold
Of fruit, and green of boughs that wave around,
The maids of Heaven with rapture shall behold
New beauty stealing o'er the summit, crowned
As with the tresses of a woman bound
Upon her fair head as a diadem.
And the bright mountain, swelling from the ground,
Like the full breast of Earth, shall ravish them,
When thou, dark Cloud, art there, that bosom's bud and gem.

* "The Hindus have been the object of much idle panegyric, and equally idle detraction. Some writers have invested them with every amiable attribute, and they have been deprived by others of the common virtues of humanity. Amongst the excellencies denied to them, gratitude has been always particularized; and there are many of the European residents in India who scarcely imagine that the natives of the country ever heard of such a sentiment. To them, and to all detractors on this head, the above verse is a satisfactory reply; and that no doubt of its tenor may remain, I add the literal translation of the original passage. "Even a low man, when his friend comes to him for assistance, will not turn away his face, in consideration of former kindness;—how, therefore, should the exalted act thus?"—H. H. WILSON.

XVI.

If worn and weary with thy lengthening way,
 The famous hill of Chitrakuta* woos
 Thy friendly presence for awhile to stay ;
 There, as the grateful rest thy strength renews,
 Do not, for pity, gentle Cloud, refuse
 To soothe his burning heat with thy soft rain.
 Sweet mercy, watered with the kindly dews
 Of virtue, is a seed ne'er sown in vain :
 Soon will the generous act its worthy fruit obtain.

XVII.

Linger an hour, then, launching lightly forth,
 Leave the dark glades which Wood-nymphs wander o'er ;
 Pursue thine airy journey to the north
 With pinions swifter for thy minisht store.
 Soon over Vindhya's mountains wilt thou soar,
 And Reva's rippling stream whose waters glide
 Beneath their feet, without their rush and roar,
 In many a rock-barred channel, summer-dried,
 Like lines of paint that deck an elephant's huge side.

XVIII.

Here, where the air is heavy with the scent
 Of elephants that roam along the rill,
 From the fair stream restore thy treasures spent
 In travel and thy wasted bosom fill,
 Lest the rude wind drive thee about at will.
 To cheer thy way, each bud shall lovelier grow,
 And fragrant jasmine be more fragrant still,
 The burning woods waft odours from below,
 And clear-toned birds delight thy onward path to show.

* "The mountain here mentioned must be in the vicinity of Omerkuntuk, and part of the range : the name signifies, "the variegated or wonderful peak," and is applied to a number of hills : the most famous hill of this name is situated in Bundelkund."—H. H. WILSON.

XIX.

Each Sylph shall watch thee with observant eyes,
And mark the Rain-birds eager for the rain
Flocking to meet thee from the distant skies.
Then he will count, in ever-lengthening chain,
Mounting from fen and field, crane after crane.
And, when thy voice of thunder, loud and clear,
Proclaims thee nigh, to his fond breast will strain
His darling, mingling with each kiss a tear
Drawn from his happy eyes by love's unreasoning fear.

XX.

Ah me ! in vain, 'mid lovely scenes like those,
I bid my friendly herald to be fleet ;
Will not each mountain woo thee to repose,
Where wild woods murmur and the flowers are sweet ?
Will not the peacock, as he turns to greet
Thy coming with love-beaming eye, prevail ?
Will not his tender looks my hopes defeat ;
With two successful blandishment assail
Thy yeilding heart, and cause thy promised truth to fail ?

XXI.

On, on, my herald ! as thou'allest nigh,
A green of richer glory will invest
Dasarna's groves where the pale leaf is dry.
There shall the swans awhile their pinions rest.
Then the Rose-apple, in full beauty drest,
Shall show her fruit : then shall the crane prepare,
Warned of the coming rain, to build her nest,
And many a tender spray shall rudely tear
From the old village tree, the peasants' sacred care.

XXII.

But rest not yet ; thy steady course pursue,
And a town foremost on the rolls of fame,

Vidisa,* seat of kings, will charm thy view,
 And bless thee far above thy fondest aim ;
 Where Vetravati, like an amorous dame
 With arching brows, her rippling waves will show,
 And with each winning art thy love will claim,
 Enslaving thee with the melodious flow
 Of streams that kiss the bank, murmuring soft and low.

XXIII.

Thence to a lowlier hill direct thy flight,
 And for a moment on its crest descend ;
 Thy touch its faint Kadambas shall delight,
 And through each spray new life and rapture send
 That bud and blossom shall with joy distend.
 These are the groves where youthful lovers meet
 Their gold-bought beauties, whose rich perfumes blend
 With the wild flowers till every dark retreat
 Is loaded with the scent that fills the rocky seat.

XXIV.

Rise with new vigour in thy wings, and look
 Upon the fainting jasmine-buds that pine
 Along the parent bank of the mountain brook :
 To their mute prayer in pitying love incline,
 And water them with those sweet drops of thine,
 Shading awhile the heat-drop—beaded face
 Of the young flower-girl as she hastes to twine
 Her fragrant wreath, too languid to replace.
 The dropping lotus-bud she culled her ear to grace.

XXV.

Here bend a little from thy straight career,
 And though thou speedest on to northern skies,

* Vidisa appears to be modern Bhilsa in the province of Malwa.

Turn and behold a wondrous sight, for near
Thy path Oujein's* imperial domes arise.
Shouldst thou not see her women's glorious eyes,
That flash to love or kindle to disdain
In fire that with the lightning's splendour vies—
Those looks that bind the heart as with a chain—
Thy birth has been for naught, thy life is all in vain.

XXVI.

Now from the level of thine airy road
Glide gently down, and amorously sink
Upon Nirvindhya's breast who long has glowed
With love of thee : there cling, and kiss, and drink.
She, with the wild swans clamorous on her brink,
And their white wings around her for a zone,
From thy soft pressure will not coyly shrink.
Her trembling wavelets will her rapture own,
And testify her love by every gesture shown.

XXVII.

Sail on, refresht, dear envoy, nor forget
To look with pity upon Sindu, pale
With sere leaves shaken o'er the rivulet
From her own trees by the hot summer gale.
For her sad shrunken waters well-nigh fail,
Thin as the length of hair which women braid
When their dear husbands' absence they bewail.
O, pity her, thou gentle Cloud, and aid
The longing of her love by each fond look betrayed.

* "Ujjayani, or the modern Oujein, is supposed to have been the residence of our poet, and the capital of his celebrated patron, Vikramaditya. It has been a place of great note, from the earliest periods of Hindu tradition down to the present day."—H. H. WILSON.

XXVIII.

Near thee a bright imperial city stands,
 The blest Avanti or Visala,* pride
 Of all the earth ; famed for its minstrel band
 Who with the magic of their verse have vied
 To spread the tender story far and wide
 Of King Udayana : † a glorious town,
 Brought, by the happy Saints unsatisfied
 With all that Paradise can offer, down,
 To be their best reward, their virtue's worthiest crown. ‡

* Synonyms of Oujein.

† "Pradyota was a sovereign of Oujein, who had a daughter named Vasavadatta whom he intended to bestow in marriage upon a King of the name of Sanjaya. In the meantime the princess sees the figure of Vatsaraja (or Udayana) in a dream, and becomes enamoured of him. She contrives to inform him of her love, and he carries her off from her father and his rival."—WILSON.

Vasavadatta has been edited and elegantly epitomized in English by DR. FITZEDWARD HALL.

‡ "Besides ultimate felicity, the Hindus have several minor degrees of happiness ; amongst which is the enjoyment of Indra's Swarga, or, in fact, of a Muhammadan paradise. The degree and duration of the pleasures of this paradise are proportioned to the merits of those admitted to it ; and "they, who have enjoyed this lofty region of Swarga, but whose virtue is exhausted, revisit the habitation of mortals." The case now alluded to seems, however, to be something different from that so described by Sir William Jones. It appears, by the explanation of the Commentators, that the exhausted pleasures of Swarga had proved insufficient for the recompense of certain acts of austerities, which, however, were not such as to merit final emancipation : the divine persons had therefore to seek elsewhere for the balance of their reward ; and for that purpose they returned to Earth, bringing with them the fairest portion of Swarga, in which they continued to live in the discharge of pious duties till the whole account was settled, and their liberated spirits were re-united with the great, uniform, and primeval essence. The portion of Swarga thus brought to Earth was the city Avanti ; whose superior sanctity and divine privileges are here alluded to, and thus explained by the poet."—H. WILSON.

XXIX.

The sweet soft zephyr, laden with the scent
 Which every lotus opening to the air
 Of morning from its rifled stores has lent,
 Plays wooingly around the loosened hair
 And fevered cheek of every lady there ;
 Then as it blows o'er Sipra* fresh and strong,
 Bids all the swans upon her banks prepare
 To hail the sun-rise with their sweetest song,
 And loves with its own voice the music to prolong.

XXX.

Rest on these flower-sweet terraces, and feel,
 From open casements where woven braid
 Their long, soft locks, delicious odour steal.
 Look on the polisht marble where the maid
 Her small foot, blushing with the dye, has laid ;
 There will the peacock with a joyous dance
 Spring forth to greet thee from the mango's shade,
 And hail his dear friend with a loving glance :
 O, rest in this sweet spot, nor lose this blessed chance.

XXXI.

Hence to the temple of the mighty Lord
 Whom Chandi† loves and all the worlds revere ;
 There for a moment shalt thou be adored
 By those who serve him, when thy hues appear
 Like Siva's neck,‡ as though their God were near.
 Then through the garden pleasant gales shall stray
 From Gandhavati's fountain, crystal-clear,

* The river on which Oujein stands.

† A name of the consort of Siva.

‡ But Siva those destroying streams

Drank up at Brahma's beck :

Still in thy throat the dark flood gleams,

God of the Azure Neck.

Bearing the scent of lotus-blooms away
Shaken by lovely girls who in the water play.

XXXII.

Stay till the hour of evening worship comes ;
Stay while the day-God lingers in the sky ;
Then with low thunderings, for the call of drums,
Win precious guerdon from the Lord Most High.
Each dancing-girl, with rapture-beaming eye,
Shall thank thee as thy soft drops cool the ground,
While her faint hands the jewelled chowries* ply,
And, as she moves her languid feet, around
Her slender waist the chimes of tinkling silver sound.

XXXIII.

When the thick shadows of dark midnight fall
Blinding the maidens in the royal street,
Who fain would fly where love and rapture call,
O, let thy flashes guide their erring feet
And lead them safely till their loves they meet.
But check thy rain and still thy thunder, lest
Their terrors force the maidens to retreat.
Then with thy lightning bride, play-vearied, rest
Where sleeps, high up the tower, the white dove in her nest.

XXXIV.

Thence, with the rising sun, thy course pursue,
For loving envoys ever shun delay ;
But hide him not, when mounting, from the view,
For the false lover comes with coming day
To the poor weeping girl, to kiss away

* A brush made of peacock's feathers or the tail of the yak. It is used as a fan, or to whisk off flies and other insects ; and this piece of attention is paid by Hindus to the figures of their Gods.

The water from her eyes. So comes the Sun
To cheer the lilies with his amorous ray,
And kiss their drooping heads, till, one by one,
They dry the dewy drops that down their petals run.

XXXV.

Then will thy shadow for a moment sleep
On the white bosom of Gambhira's stream,*
And thy dear image in her crystal deep
Blend with the fancies of her maiden dream.
Then will she wake to win thee with the gleam
Of finny darters for the lore of eyes.
Steel not thy heart against her love nor deem
Her lilies smile but to allure the prize:
O, yield thee to her prayer, O, yield thee and be wise.

XXXVI.

Ah, yes! I see thee in her loving arms—
Those feathery branches of the tall bamboo—
And spread beneath thee are her yielded charms,
And her smooth sides uncovered to the view.
How could such loveliness unheeded woo?
Who could resist her softly pleading smile,
With heart all cold and dead, if e'er he knew
What joy it is to kiss each breast-like isle?
Who, who would turn away, nor linger there awhile?

XXXVII.

Charged with the odours of the wakened earth
Whom thy fresh rain has left so pure and gay,
The wind of early morning, wild with mirth,

* This river, and the Gandhavati in the vicinity of the temple of Siva, which lately occurred, are probably amongst the numerous and (now) nameless brooks with which the province of Malwa abounds.—H. H. WILSON.

Amid the branches of the grove shall stray
 And woo each tendril to responsive play :
 Then waft thee on to Devagiri's height,
 Charming the ear with music on the way,
 Where languid elephants shall stay his flight
 And drink his balmy breath with wonder and delight.

XXXVIII.

There gleams the temple, loved and honoured most
 By Skanda, Lord of War ; who, at the head
 Of the bright legions of the heavenly host,
 Embattled Gods to arms and conquest led—
 A wondrous Child, in flames of glory bred—
 O, crown the slayer of his demon foes !
 Turn to a cloud of living flowers, and shed
 O'er his young brows the lily and the rose
 Bathed in the lucid stream through heavenly realms that flows.

XXXIX.

Send forth thy thunder, till the glorious voice,
 By rocky dell and cavern multiplied,
 Bidding the peacock, in the shade, rejoice,
 Calls him to dance along the mountain's side :
 Majestic bird, whom Skanda loves to ride,*
 Whom Skanda's mother holds so wondrous dear
 That when his moulted plumes, in all their pride
 Of starry radiance, fall and glitter near,
 She lifts them from the ground to grace her royal ear.

XL.

Thy homage rendered to the Warrior-God
 Whose infant steps amid the thickets strayed
 Where the reeds wave over the holy sod,

* Skanda, or Kartikeya, the War-God, born to destroy the demon Taraka, is represented mounted on a peacock.

Speed on, but let thy course awhile be staid
Till meet obeisance to that stream be made
That sprang in olden time from sacred gore
Of hecatombs by Rantideva paid,*
And through the lands her author's glory bore
Enshrined within her waves, to spread for evermore.

XLI.

In fear, each minstrel of the heavenly quire
Shall see thee stoop those watery stores to drain,
And fly thee trembling lest his darling lyre
Be robbed of music by thy threatened rain.
Then from his airy watch-tower will he strain
His eager eyes the wondrous sight to view,
As thy large lucid drops, in many a chain,
Hang their long pendants o'er thy borrowed blue,
A string of pearls that show the sapphire gleaming through.

XLII.

That river past, to Dasapura fly,
And with the shadow of thy coming rouse
The beauties of the city till each eye
Glances its welcome : till each maid and spouse,

* "Sprung from the blood of countless oxen shed. The sacrifice of the horse or of the cow appears to have been common in the earliest periods of the Hindu ritual. It has been conceived that the sacrifice was not real, but typical; and that the form of sacrificing only was performed upon the victim, after which it was set at liberty. The text of this passage, however, is unfavourable to such a notion, as the metamorphosis of the blood of the kine into a river certainly implies that blood was diffused. The expression of the original, literally rendered, is, "sprung from the blood of the daughters of Surabhi," that is, 'kine;' Surabhi being a celebrated cow produced at the churning of the ocean, and famed for granting to her votaries whatever they desired. "Daughter of Surabhi" is an expression of common occurrence to denote the cow."—H. H. WILSON.

Beneath the delicate bending of her brows,
Shows her dark pupil flashing wild with gleo
In her pure pearly eye-ball, and allows
Short glimpses of a sight as fair to see
As a white jasmine-bud where sits the black wild bee.

XLIII.

Then, speeding on to Brahmavartta's land,
Hover awhile o'er Kuru's fatal field*
Rich with the blood of many a slaughtered band ;
Where the proud banner waved, the war-cry pealed,
Where the sword smote upon the helm and shield ;
When godlike Arjuna,† with arrowy hail,
Laid low the heads of kings who scorned to yield ;
As when the arrows of thy sleet assail
The golden lilies' heads and strew them down the vale.

XLIV.

Now to Sarasvatī,‡ whose waters roll

* "Kuru-Kshetra, the Field of the Kurus, is the scene of the celebrated battle between them and the Pandus, which forms the subject of the Mahabharata. It lies a little to the south-east of Thanesar, and is still a place of note and pilgrimage. It is not far from Pniput, the seat of another celebrated engagement, that between the assembled Princes of Hindustan, and the combined strength of the Marhattas. This part of the country, indeed, presenting few obstacles to the movement of large armies, has in every period of the history of Hindustan been the theatre of contention."—H. H. WILSON.

† "Arjun was the friend and pupil of Krishna, and the third of the Pandava Princes. He has been long ago introduced to European readers, especially in Sir Charles Wilkins's able translation of the Bhagavad-Gita ; and appears, in the opening of that poem, in a very amiable light."—H. H. WILSON.

‡ "The Saraswati, or as it is corruptly called, the Sursooty, falls from the southern portion of the Himalaya mountains, and runs into the great desert, where it is lost in its sands. It flows a little to the north-west of Kuru-Kshetra, and though rather out of the line of the clouds's progress not sufficiently so to prevent the introduction into the poem of a stream so celebrated and so holy."—H. H. WILSON.

Beside thy path, with due respect draw near ;
 And let her cleansing wave refresh thy soul.
 When Balarama,* filled with noble fear
 Of kindred slaughter, could no longer cheer
 His sorrowing spirit with the sparkling wine,
 Though, mirrored in the cup, the eyes most dear
 Of his own Revati were wont to shine,
 He sought this limpid flood and made the spot divine.

XLV.

On to the place where infant Ganga leaps
 From the dark woods that belt the Mountains' King.
 Hurling her torrent down the rugged steeps :
 Those holy waters, as the sages sing.
 To Sagar's children bliss and heaven could bring.†

* "We have here the reason why the waters of the Saraswati are objects of religious veneration. Balaram, the elder brother of Krishna, refused to take any part in the warfare between the Kurus and the Pandus, and retired into voluntary seclusion filled with grief at the nature of the contest."—H. H. WILSON.

† "The Ganges, according to the legend was brought from heaven, by the religious rites of Bhagiratha, the great-grandson of Sagar; who, as well as that king, had engaged in a long series of acts of austerity, for the purpose of procuring the descent of the river. To wash the ashes of Sagar's 60,000 sons. The youths had been reduced to this state by the indignation of Kapila, a saint, whose devotions they had disturbed in their eager quest of the horse that was to be the victim of an Aswamedha by their father. Their misfortunes did not, however, cease with their existence; as their admission to Swarga depended, according to the instructions of Garuda, upon the use of the water of the Ganges in the administration of their funeral rites. At this period the Ganges watered the plains of heaven alone; and it was no easy undertaking to induce her to resign those for an humble and earthly course. Sagara, his son Ansuman, and grandson Dilipa, died without being able to effect the descent of the heavenly stream: but his great-grandson, Bhagiratha, was more fortunate; and his long-continued austerities were rewarded by the fall of the Ganges, the bathing of the ashes of his ancestors with the holy water, and the establishment of them in the enjoyment of Swarga."—H. H. WILSON.

Fresh from her native sky, a sportive maid,
 On Siva's awful head she dared to cling ;
 And with the laughter of her foam repaid
 His consort's jealous frown as with his hair she played.*

XLVI.

Drink, for the flood is living crystal ; drink,
 For the warm gale thy weary wings has dried :
 Come, gently bend thee o'er her rocky brink
 And tint her waves with azure as they glide :
 So when dark Jumna's tributary tide
 With kissing waves to blend with Ganga flows,
 The mightier waters beautifully dyed
 With borrowed azure to the sun disclose,
 Mixt with their pearly light, the sapphire's darker glows.

XLVII.

See ! the proud parent of this heavenly child
 Woos thee to rest upon his breezy height,
 Where herds of musk-deer, as they wander wild,
 Enrich with odour every crag. Alight,
 And couched upon the summit robed in white
 Enhance his snowy beauty, as one speck
 Of sable shows more gloriously bright
 The skin of Siva's Bull,† and serves to deck
 The whiteness of his flank, the splendour of his neck.

* "The earth being unable to bear the sudden descent of so great a river as the Ganges, Siva was induced, at the intercession of Bhagiratha, to interpose his sacred head. Accordingly, Ganga first alighted on the head of the deity, and remained for a considerable period wandering amongst the tresses of his long and entangled hair, to the extreme jealousy and displeasure, according to Kalidasa, or the goddess Gauri, or Parvati, Siva's consort."
 —H. H. WILSON.

"The Descent of the Ganges" has been magnificently translated, from the Ramayan, by the Dean of St. Paul's.

† The animal on which Siva loves to ride, always represented of a milk white colour.

XLVIII.

Hark ! the gales whistling through the woods of pine,
Urging to madness all the straining boughs
That twist and chafe and bend and interwine,
The latent flame to wildest fury rouse,
Singeing the long hair of the mountain cows.
Quick ! rain a thousand torrents on the crest
Of the kind hill and cool his burning brows :
With wealth of water thou art richly blest,
And fortune's sweetest fruit is aiding friends distress.

XLIX.

Should Gryphon hosts, by mad presumption led,
Vext by thy thunder, mount the realm of air
To ride thee down beneath their impious tread,
Laugh with thy rain to see them baffled there,
And with the dashing of thy hail-stones scare
Thy scattered foes. So let them learn how vain
Is the wild enterprise they fain would dare ;
That the fond strivings of ambition gain
No guerdon but disgrace, no recompense but pain.

L.

But stoop a little from thy pride of place :
With circling motion reverently slow
Around the rock where pilgrims still may trace
The foot of Mahadeva,* softly go.
There saintly breasts with rapt devotion glow :
There holy hands the flames of worship feed.
There His good servants, saved from sin and woe,
From the sore weight of earthly life are freed,
Join His own heavenly band and gain a priceless meed.

* The ' Great God,' Siva.

LI.

Hast thou no voice to laud Him ? Be not dumb ;
 But let thy thunder round the caverned hill
 Proclaim His glory like a mightier drum.
 The gales with melody each reed shall fill :
 The Maidens of the sky, whose bosoms thrill
 With holy rapture, shall rejoice and sing ;
 And all shall swell the glorious concert till
 Valley and mountain, earth and air shall ring
 Hailing with jubilant hymns the great victorious King.

LII.

Skirting the mansion of eternal snows
 Compress thy form, and winding round explore
 Where Krauncha's parted rocks a pass disclose
 Traversed by swans—those rocks that burst before
 The might of Rama* and the axe he bore.
 Then show like Vishnu's darksome foot, whose tread
 Measured the sky and earth's broad bosom o'er,
 When Bali with his proud heart filled with dread
 Confessed the Saviour God and bowed his impious head.†

* The Krauncha pass is said to have been made by Parasurama, or Rama with the axe, an incarnation of Vishnu.

† 'The story of Bali and the Vamana, or dwarf Avatar, was first told by Sonnerat, and has since been frequently repeated. As the former is a good specimen of the style in which Hindu legends were narrated by European travellers in the last century, it may be here inserted. "The fifth incarnation was in a Bramin dwarf, under the name of Vamen : it was wrought to restrain the pride of the giant Bely. The latter, after having conquered the gods, expelled them from Sorgon : he was generous, true to his word, compassionate, and charitable. Vichenou, under the form of a very little Bramin, presented himself before him while he was sacrificing, and asked him for three paces of land to build a hut. Bely ridiculed the apparent imbecility of the dwarf, in telling him that he ought not to limit his demand to a bequest so trifling ;—that his generosity could bestow a much larger donation of land. Vamen answered, that being of so small a stature, what he asked was more than sufficient. The prince immediately granted his request ; and, to ratify his donation

LIII.

Now soaring upward, on Kailasa's crest,
 That lends its mirror to each Heavenly Maid,
 Linger a little as an honoured guest,
 And let thine airy pilgrimage be staid.
 Once that high mountain shook and was afraid,
 Loosened by Ravan, Lord of Lanka's isle ;
 Now cleaving heaven, to all the lands displayed,
 The white peaks of the lily-radiant pile
 Flash on the world below, like Siva's glorious smile.

LIV.

I see the summits of the hill, that shine
 Like new-cut ivory so purely white,
 Gleam with fresh lustre as that form of thine
 Descends upon them, and thy tint of night
 Tips with a sable pall the snowy height.
 So Balarama's limbs of silvery hue
 Show fairer in their purple livery dight ;
 So from his chest and arms exposed to view
 The heightened sheen beneath sets off the raiment too.*

LV.

High fate is thine should sportive Gauri† list
 In those sweet moments ere the close of day—
 United the serpent-bracelet from the wrist—
 Hand lockt in hand, with Siva there to stray.

poured water into his right hand ; which was no sooner done, than the dwarf grew so prodigiously, that his body filled the universe ! He measured the earth with one pace, and the heavens with another ; and then summoned Bely to give him his word for the third. The prince then recognised Vichenou, adored him, and presented his head to him : but the god, satisfied with his submission, sent him to govern the Pandalon ; and permitted him to return every year to the earth, the day of the full moon, in the month of November."—H. H. WILSON.

* He is represented of a white colour, clothed in a dark-blue vest.

† One of the names of Siva's consort.

Come, aid with easy steps their upward way :
 Thy stores of rain within thy breast confine,
 And let the heavenly pair delighted lay
 The blessing of their feet on stairs that shine
 With gold caught from the sun, ruby and almandine.

LVI.

Then will celestial maids with laugh and shout
 Open their lovely arms thy form to seize,
 And o'er their tresses force thy waters out
 Which the light touch of kindred diamond* frees.
 But should too long restraint thy soul displease,
 Send forth the thunder of thy voice, and they,
 Fleeter through terror than the western breeze,
 Will fly thee, e'en in their delicious play,
 And seek their distant home in wonder and dismay.

LVII.

Near is the goal, yet, ere thy course be run,
 One sweet fresh draught of limpid water take
 Where golden lilies opening to the sun
 Stud the broad bosom of the Manas' lake.
 Deign for awhile a friendly shade to make
 For Indra's elephant, and, floating through,
 With the soft fanning of thy pinions shake
 The Heavenly Tree, and all her blooms renew
 With the young morning's breath embalmed with silver dew.

* "The diamond and thunderbolt, according to Hindu ideas, are of one substance, and are called by the same name. As the fall of the thunderbolt is usually followed by rain, and may thus be considered as its cause, the propinquity and the mutual friction of the same substance upon the wrists of our young ladies is, in like manner, supposed to occasion the dispersion of the fluid treasures of the Cloud."—H. H. WILSON.

† A celebrated lake in the centre of the Himalayas. "We here take leave of the geographical part of the poem, which is highly creditable to Kalidasa's accuracy, and now come to the region of unmixed fable, the residence of Kuvera and his demigods."—H. H. WILSON.

LVIII.

There, by the mountain claspt in loving arms,
Alaka, City of the Blessed, lies.
Her bright feet bathed by Ganga's flood, she charms
With marvellous beauty e'en immortal eyes.
Thou too, free rover, shalt her beauty prize,
And often wander to mine own dear town.
Ner shall sweet Alaka thy love despise,
But proudly wear upon her domes a crown
Of the pure drops of pearl thou pourest softly down.

LIX.

And she has charms which naught but thine excels :
High as thyself her airy turrets soar,
And from her gilded palaces there swells
The voice of drums, loud as thy thunder's roar :
Thy pearls are mockt by many a jewelled floor.
Come, with the glories of thy bow compare
The varied tints on arch and corridor :
And, for thy lightning in the midnight air,
Look in her maidens' eyes and own a rival there.

LX.

Unmatcht is she for lovely girls who learn
To choose the flowers that suit them best, and bring
The varied treasures of each month in turn
To aid those charms which need no heightening :
The Amaranth, bright glory of the spring ;
The Lotus, gathered from the summer flood ;
Acacias, taught around their brows to cling ;
The Jasmine's fragrant white, their locks to stud ;
And, bursting at thy rain, the young Kadamba-bud.

LXI.

O beauties, worthy of the beauteous place,
That sweetest city which I know so well,

Where mine own brethren of ethereal race
Blest with the love of those fair angels dwell.
In homes too beautiful for tongue to tell !
Those homes by night a starry radiance fills,
Shot from the jewelled floors where breathes the smell
Of roses, and while melting music thrills,
They quaff the precious wine the Heavenly Tree distils.

LXII.

The tell-tale sunbeam of the morning, thrown
Upon the path each roving beauty chose,
Falls on some faded flower, some loosened zone,
A withered lotus or a dying rose,
Or bracelet which her haste forgot to close ;
Here a dropt diadem of orient pearl
The fond impatience of its mistress shows ;
And here the jasmine-bud that deckt the curl,
Lying upon the grass, betrays the amorous girl.

LXIII.

There the coy nymph, too eagerly embraced
By some young lover whom the night makes bold,
Slips from the arm that stealing round her waist
Has forced her, shrinking from its amorous hold,
Her ruffled robe over her breast to fold ;
Then, armed with fragrant powder, she will turn
Where, on high pedestals of gems and gold,
Bright torches with too clear a radiance burn,
To hide the triumph of the love she will not spurn.

LXIV.

There, driven by the ever-moving gale.
The clouds, thy brethren, in an endless train
Around each palace of the city sail ;
Now easy access to the halls they gain,
And mar the painter's art, with dewy stain.

But when the traces of their steps they see
They fear within those chambers to remain,
In wreathing clouds of incense seek to flee,
Glide through the lattice bars and once more wander free.

LXV.

Dark is the sky behind thee ; but, whene'er
The light wind moves thy sombre veil away,
Again the moon, most excellently fair,
With naught the glory of the light to stay,
Shines on each chamber with a loving ray,
Where beauty, waking from her amorous dream,
Sees with delight the radiance play
On hanging crystals* where thy dew-drops gleam,
And feels through all her frame returning vigour stream.

LXVI.

Though Kama, Tyrant of the Soul, in awe
Of Siva, foe to Love, Kuvera's friend,
Forbears in Alaka his bow to draw,†
Still mightier arms her merry maidens lend ;
What bow so lovely as the brows they bend ?
What archer's skill so perfect as the art
Of those bewitching eyes that love to send
The arrows of their glances forth, and dart
Those shafts that never fail, but pierce the lover's heart ?

LXVII.

Now close beneath thee thou wilt see my home,
Where, flashing forth, the jewelled archway's glow,

* "The moon gem, which is supposed to absorb the rays of the moon, and to emit them again in the form of pure and cool moisture."—H. H. WILSON.

† "This alludes to the fate which befel the Hindu Cupid upon his assailing Siva, whom, at the desire of the gods, he inflamed with the love of Parvati. Siva, in his wrath, reduced the little deity to ashes, by a flame from the eye in his forehead ; and although he was subsequently restored to animation, he is here supposed to remain in dread of his former enemy."—H. H. WILSON.

North of my lord Kuvera's royal dome,
 With hues of glory mocks the heavenly bow.
 There my love's flowers in dazzling beauty blow :
 There in the midst the tall Mandara* see
 Bending the burden of her branches low
 To touch her lady's hand : no child might be
 Nurtured with tenderer care than that her darling tree.

LXVIII.

There girt with emerald steps a bright lake gleams,
 Where the gold lotus fires the lily's white :
 The swans that sail upon its silver streams
 Shall hail thy coming with renewed delight,
 And love the cool waves better for the sight
 That bids them linger near the pleasant shore,
 Without a wish to seek in distant flight
 The mountain lake that seemed so dear before,
 That lovely mountain lake now scarce remembered more.

LXIX.

Deckt with smooth sapphires, rising from the fount,
 A spot beloved by my young bride of old,
 Sacred to rest and pleasure, stands a mount,
 Which a thick plantain-grove belts round with gold.
 E'en now, dark Cloud, as these sad eyes behold
 Thy sombre mass girt by thy lightning's sheen,
 They see the spot of which my tongue has told :
 Back to my soul comes fresh that glorious scene,
 The plantains' circling gold, the hillock's velvet green.

LXX.

Sweet clustering trailers, and each fairest flower
 That charms the sense or captivates the eye,

* The Coral-tree, *Erythrina Indica*.

† " If the flowers had been her own children, she
 Could never have nursed them more tenderly."

The Sensitive Plant.

Give grace and odour to my lady's bower.
The bright Asoka and the Kesari vie
For her caresses as my love walks by :
That asks the pressure of her foot,* and this,
Wild for the joy for which I vainly sigh,
With me aspiring seeks a higher bliss,
To touch those perfect lips with a long loving kiss

LXXI.

See, on a pedestal of crystal placed
A golden column, very tall and fair,
With richest gems, like budding cane-shoots, graced,
Towers o'er the waving trees ; and gleaming there,
The blue-neckt peacock drinks the evening air ;
And when my darling wanders forth alone,
He tries each art to drive away her care,
Dispreads his plumes and dances to the tone
Of the melodious chime made by her tinkling zone.

LXXII.

Led by these tokens thou wilt surely know
The once bright dwelling of my love and me,
When our glad lives were strangers yet to woe :
But altered now that happy spot may be,
Since the stern vengeance of my lord's decree
Has torn me far from all I loved away :
The lotus glories in the sun, but he
Leaves his sad mistress at the close of day
To mourn with folded blooms the light that made her gay.

LXXIII.

Gently descending, on that hillock fall,
Not in full glory lest that form of thine

* " I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet."

In all its splendour, all its might, appal
My timid lady. Let thy lightning shine
Like sportive fire-flies in a flashing line,
And to the friendly eyes my darling show.
She stands within her Chamber, most divine
Of all the works of God, with rosy glow
Of lips, with teeth of pearl, eyes of the startled roe.

LXXIV.

O, see her silent there, my second life,
Like a poor love-bird mourning for her mate,
My lonely, weeping, miserable wife,
Weeping at early morn, at evening late,
With bitter tears, her banisht husband's fate.
Where hast thou seen a nymph so soft of mould,
So tender, loving, and disconsolate?
Sure the sad lady's spirit dwelt of old
In some frail lotus flower that shrank from rain and cold.

LXXV.

See, on her hand her faded cheek reclines;
Long hanging tresses veil her drooping head;
Bedimmed with tears her eye no longer shines,
And the bright colour of her lip is fled,
For dewy sighs have washed away the red.
Like the cold moon is she, sad, feeble, pale,
When o'er its face thy pall, dark Cloud, is spread,
And all the silver beams, imprisoned, fail
To penetrate the shroud, to pierce the sombre veil.

LXXVI.

Now as the sight of thee renews her woe,
She turns to sacrifice: from her wild eyes,
That picture forth my form, new torrents flow,
To see my mournful wasted image rise.

Then to her favourite bird she sadly cries :
'Dost thou remember, pet, when thou wast free?
And is the mate, with whom, from summer skies
Down sailing, in the well-known roosting tree
'Twas once thy lot to rest, still dearly loved by thee ?'

LXXVII.

Or she will touch her lute with careless grace,
And with her low soft voice prepare to sing
Some little ballad of mine ancient race :
But soon the tears that flow from memory's spring
Mar the sweet music of the silver string.
Her thoughts will wander from the cherisht lay,
The notes of triumph will no longer ring,
And her melodious voice will die away
In some wild wailing strain meet for the evil day.

LXXVIII.

Then bravely struggling with her dark despair,
She turns away, and fondly numbers o'er
The faded garlands which her pious care
Twines every month that comes, above the door ;
Counts to the happy day that will restore
Her husband ; and the thought, so passing sweet,
Brings light and rapture to her eye once more :
Her bosom swells, her pulses wildly beat,
And fancy hears the step of my returning feet.

LXXIX.

These cares by day assuage the mourner's grief,
But, Ah ! the night brings only woe and pain,
Be this the season for my love's relief ;
Till then, dear Cloud, thy soothing voice restrain,
And give thine aid when other help is vain.

When all is dark and still float softly near
The lattice of her chamber, and remain
To breathe thy message in her sleepless ear,
And in the weary night my widowed darling cheer.

LXXX.

Then on her lonely couch, thin, anguish-worn,
Watching and weeping still she sadly lies,
Pale as the waning moon that flies the morn
When first the sunbeams fire the eastern skies.
She slowly counts 'mid tears and deep-drawn sighs
The long long weary hours that used to be
Like moments, praying that the sun may rise
To chase the lingering night that wont to flee
Like a quick flash of joy when it was past with me.

LXXXI.

But should my love her weary eyelids close,
Lulled by sweet thoughts and many a hopeful sign,
Let not thy thunder break her soft repose,
Nor sudden bid her wreathing arms untwine
Lest in her dreams they should be clasping mine :
Still let such dreams her aching bosom bless :
Then, when the sunbeams on her lattice shine,
With thy deep-sounding words the dame address,
And thus my longing love and tender hope express :

LXXXII.

'O lonely mourner, from thy lord I speed,
And to his distant home fond greetings bear.
'Tis mine the exile's weary steps to lead
In safety back to soothe his bride's despair :
'Tis mine, with thunder rolling through the air,
To wake the sigh for all he left behind,
The well-loved cot and wife still weeping there ;
And urge his trembling fingers to unbind
The mourner's braid of hair for his long absence twined.

LXXXIII.

The faithful lord on Rama's wood-crowned hill
Mourns the sad lot that severs him from thee ;
And in fond fancy he is with thee still
Though far away by hostile fate's decree.
Wasted with woe, he seems thy form to see
Worn, like his own, with tears that ever roll
From orbs that with his weeping eyes agree :
He feels the longing of thy kindred soul,
And counts thy sighs in those his breast can ne'er control.

LXXXIV.

He bids me now his loving message speak,
For far is he from all he holds most dear,
But O, what joy, might he but touch thy cheek
And softly whisper thus into thine ear :
'O peerless creature, in my prison here
Signs of thy beauty meet me every hour :
I see the graces of thy form appear
Faintly reflected in each fairest flower
That twines her tender shoots around my lonely bower.

LXXXV.

When from my path the startled roe-deer run,
Their eyes, sweet love, thy gentle glance recall :
The peacock's glories, gleaming in the sun,
Show like thy tresses glittering as they fall :
I see thine arching eyebrow in the small
Ripple upon the brook : the moon, Ah me !
Brings back thy pure pale cheek : in these, in all
The fairest sights that nature boasts, I see
Faint emblems of the charms that meet in none but thee.

LXXXVI.

Of my love-guided hand essays to paint
Thy portrait on the rock with mineral dyes ;

And soon as fancy fondly sees a faint
Resemblance of thy well-loved face arise,
I fall upon the ground with eager cries
Of transport : but o'en here an envious veil
Fate interposes, and the vision flies ;
Gone is the form I wildly thought to hail,
And dim with blinding tears my loving glances fail.

LXXXVII.

The spirits of the grove, believe me, weep
As I lie tossing on my lonely bed :
Their pearly tears steal gently down, and steep
The green leaves that o'er canopy my head,
As, in a dream of thee, they watch me spread
My arms, enlacing in their eager strain
Naught but the yielding air of night instead
Of that delicious form they would detain:
Then see me start and sigh and wake to woe again.

LXXXIII.

A welcome herald from my darling comes
The breeze that from the snowy mountain springs,
Loaded with fragrance from the oozing guns
Of pine-buds rified by its balmy wings :
To me it whispers such delicious things,
For it may be its breath has fondly played
Over my lady's bosom, whence it brings
Diviner fragrance, tenderly has laid
A kiss upon her lips, and fanned her in the shade.

LXXXIX.

But yield not, love, to dark despair, nor think
That changeless, never-ending, is our doom,
Or in the strife thy gentle soul will sink :
Some friendly stars the moonless night illumine,

Some flowers of hope amid the desert bloom :
 Life has no perfect good, no endless ill,
 No constant brightness, no perpetual gloom ;
 But circling as a wheel, and never still,
 Now down, and now above, all must their fate fulfil.

XC.

Four months remain, and when that age is fled,
 Then ends my banishment and all our pain :
 When Vishnu rises from his serpent bed*
 Where lapt in sleep the Bow-armed God has lain,
 Thy lover speeds to home and thee again :
 The moon of autumn with serener glow
 His silver influence on our nights shall rain,
 And our rapt souls with joy shall overflow
 More exquisitely sweet for all remembered woe.

XCI

Once more I see thee, but no more alone,
 Thy senses steeped in dews of slumber, lie,
 With thy fond arms around thy husband thrown.
 Thou startest, weeping, and I ask thee why
 Thy soul is troubled when thy lord is nigh.
 'Traitor,' thou sayest, as a smile and tear
 Plays on thy lip and glisten in thine eye,
 'Faithless I saw thee in my dream appear,
 Whispering tales of love into another's ear.'

* "The serpent couch is the great snake Ananta, upon which Vishnu, or, as he is here called, the Holder of the bow Sarnga (the horn-bow), reclines, during four months, from the 11th of Asharha to the 11th of Kartik ; or, as it has occurred in 1813 (the year in which the first edition was printed), from the 23rd of June to the 26th of October. The sleep of Vishnu, during the four months of the periodical rains in Hindustan, seems to bear an emblematical relation to that season. It has been compared to the Egyptian Hieroglyphical account of the sleep of Horus, typical of the annual overflow of the Nile, by the late Mr. Paterson, in his ingenious Essay on the Origin of the Hindu Religion. Asiatic Researches, vol. viii."—H. H. WILSON.

XCII.

But, dark-eyed beauty, rest thou ever sure
That, with a constancy that naught shall bend,
Through woo and absence shall my faith endure.
To slanderous tales forbear thine ear to lend :
Store in thy heart the message which I send,
And soothe thee with trust that love like mine
Will live unchanging on till time shall end ;
Burn with a flame that ne'er shall know decline,
But, fed with hope, each day shall yet more brightly shine.'

XCIII.

" Wilt thou, dear Cloud, through regions far away,
This loving message to my darling bear ?
Silent art thou, yet not in vain I pray ;
For when the Rain-birds, in the sultry air,
Crave the cool shower of thee, thou dost not care
To speak in answer, but sweet drops descend
And their faint strength and flagging wings repair ;
So comes the aid the good delight to lend,
Deeming the granted wish best answer to a friend.

XCIV.

Thus, faithful herald, having cheered her heart
Who mourn in joyless solitude her fate,
From the high forehead of that hill depart
Where the celestial Bull, who bears the weight
Of Siva, rends the rock with joy elate :
Return to me, and let my spirit know
Some comfort, hearing of my darling's state,
Ere my soul sink beneath its weight owe
Like a frail jasmine-bud scorcht by the summer's glow.

XCV.

So shall my thanks repay thy gentle deed,
And evermore my blessings follow thee :

So by the breezes wafted, shalt thou speed
To pleasant regions where thou fain wouldst be,
There rest delighted or there wander free ;
May the sweet rain ne'er fail thee ; and thy bride,
The splendid lightning, mayst thou ever see
Close to thyself in dazzling beauty ride,
Flashing upon thy breast or sporting at thy side."

XCVI.

The mourner ceased ; the airy envoy heard ;
And the fond speech, by love made eloquent,
Kuvera's breast with soft compassion stirred.
His ear in mercy to the tale he bent,
That led his yielding spirit to relent,
And made him, ere the term was nigh, restore
The exile languishing in banishment,
And freely bade him, all his trials o'er,
Live with his love again with joy for evermore.